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SHE GAVE THE DETECTIVE A SEARCHING GLANCE AND TURNED DEADLY PALE

Kit Keith,

The Revenue Spotter;

OR,
The Big Bag at Dark Run.

BY E. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE COTTAGE ON THE CLIFF.

It was a wild, tempestuous night on that certain portion of the Virginia Coast overlooking the broad Atlantic, and lying to the southwest of the Chesapeake Bay—a night when a fierce gale swept inland and lashed the stormy waters with relentless fury against the rugged shore.

The darkness was intense, and any vessel that might be so unfortunate as to be cruising along that coast, stood in imminent danger of being driven ashore and wrecked upon the rocks.

Upon a high promontory, overlooking the surf-lashed beach, was a small but rather attractive-appearing dwelling, from one of the windows of which a bright light shot out athwart the darkness, but owing to the violence of the storm, even this could penetrate but a short distance into the Stygian gloom.

A pretty picket fence surrounded the cottage; there were a garden and some shrubbery, and everything on the exterior was indicative of tidiness and thrift.

Within the dwelling all was bright and cheerful. A roaring fire burned in the fireplace, the furniture was tastily arranged, and the uncared-for was a marvel of whiteness.

At a table on which burned the lamp, sat a maiden of some eighteen years, engaged in sewing, and a pretty girl she was, with fair, rounded features, bright hazel eyes, and hair like a rift of summer sunshine. Her form was cast in Nature's perfect mold, and although her attire was plain, she was a most charming picture to gaze upon.

Near the fireplace lay a huge St. Bernard mastiff, who appeared to be the maiden's only companion, and as she sewed away diligently he watched her through his half-closed eyes, and occasionally when a fierce gust would strike the cottage and cause the doors and windows to rattle, he would rise and wag his tail, as if there were something he wished to say. Then the maiden would look up from her work and listen a moment and give a slight shiver, as another blast would strike the little building.

"Oh! it's only the wind, major," she would say. "There's a terrible storm on the water to-night, and no one will think of venturing out to pay us a visit."

But later on, when the storm seemed at the height of its fury, suddenly there came a light rap upon the door that caused the girl to start quickly and spring to her feet.

Evidently she recognized the knock, for she went at once and opened the door, and a young man, bundled up in a storm-coat, hat and knee-boots, entered.

"Well! well! 'Squire Darrel, what in the world brings you out such a night as this?" the maiden asked.

"Oh! just a notion, that's all, Sadie," was the cheery reply, as the young man, a stalwart, handsome fellow of four-and-twenty, laid aside his wraps and backed up before the fire. "The folks over at the manor all put off to bed bright and early, and as I got tired of hearing the wind moaning and roaring around the old place, I thought I'd run over here and spend a little while. So I mounted Black Hawk and here I am. It's a rough night out."

"The worst of the season," Sadie replied, handing him a chair, and resuming her seat. "I fear we shall hear of some terrible wrecks in the morning."

"I trust not. There have been too many wrecks along this coast of late, and old Jack Jarvis and his gang have been the ones to profit by them."

"Very likely, Mr. Darrel; but, you know, Jack doesn't like you any too well, and I am afraid you have done wrong in coming here. If Jack knew you were here there would be trouble, I feel certain."

"Humph! how so? I hope you don't think I'm afraid of that moonshiner? Not much! There's better fighting in one of the Darrels of Darrel Manor than in all the moonshiners and coastmen put together!"

"That may all be true, 'squire, but you know

the moonshiners of Black Run are a desperate set, and, abetted as they are by Jack Jarvis and his coast patrol, they form a formidable league. In my opinion, they were responsible for the mysterious disappearance of your father, the judge."

The young 'squire's brow darkened perceptibly at this suggestion.

"Yet you would never admit you knew anything to corroborate your suspicion," he said, gloomily.

"Nor did or do I," was the reply. "All I know is that my poor misguided parent was once a member of the gang, and that he disappeared in the same mysterious manner that yours did. Of course I naturally laid his death to the gang, but was able to prove nothing, and, since then, have had to toil for my living, as you know."

"You'd never have to raise your hand to do a stroke of work if you would but come to Darrel Manor as my wife, Sadie," the 'squire returned, earnestly. "You know I love you dearly, and you once admitted that you cared for me. Yet you are persistent in your refusal to become my wife."

"That can never be, Roger—at least, not while your mother lives. I could never be a daughter-in-law to the haughty, merciless woman who sought to wrest from us this little home, and would have done so but for Gerald Glover, the village attorney. Then, too, it is rumored at the village that you are engaged to Miss Melville; so really you have no right to speak to me of love and marriage."

The 'squire's brow again darkened.

"It is false that I am engaged to May Melville. Some one has been trying to poison your mind against me, and I've no doubt but what it is that infernal pauper lawyer, Gerald Glover. If so, hang me if I don't call him to account!"

"Mr. Glover has never mentioned your name in my presence, sir, and you do him an injustice by calling him a pauper. If he is poor, he is at least a gentleman!"

"Ah, indeed! A gentleman, is he? Perhaps he has been trying to ingratiate himself into your favor?"

"He has paid me several pleasant calls, I admit," Sadie replied, with a quiet dignity, "and as I respect him as a gentleman, in every sense of the word, I have invited him to call again."

"Then, by heaven, I'll invite him not to in a way he will understand!" the 'squire declared, springing to his feet flushed with anger. "No man shall stand between you and me, Sadie, for you shall yet be the lady of Darrel Manor. But I must be going now, and, before I do so, you must give me a kiss."

"Sir!" cried Sadie, rising, "you must excuse me. You have no right to expect such a thing of me."

"Oh, haven't I? But I have, you know, and a kiss I'm bound to have, if I have to steal it. So now get ready."

And he advanced toward her.

With a frightened cry she sprung toward the door, and no doubt would have made her escape into the tempestuous night, only that, just at the moment, the door swung open, and a stranger, young and handsome, stepped into the cottage and confronted the frightened maid.

"Hello! what appears to be the difficulty?" was his interrogation as, at a glance, he took in the situation.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN CUSSICK.

THE gang of Jack Jarvis was one of the most notorious of any in the immediate region where is the scene of our romance.

They were desperate, time-hardened characters to a man, and numbered an even dozen. Each one had committed some offense or crime that had compelled him to flee from the avenging arm of justice, and, united as a band, they worked together as brothers.

They derived their livelihood from two sources, namely: through patrolling the coast and plundering wrecked vessels and robbing the bodies of any unfortunates whose remains might be washed ashore; secondly, by abetting the interests of a band of "moonshiners," or illicit distillers, who carried on the manufacture of whisky at a haunt in the mountains a number of miles inland from the coast.

These moonshiners were the most formidable in existence at the time of which we write, and although the U. S. revenue officers had made numerous attempts to unearth their rendezvous and break up the organization, they had never been able to do so up to the time of our story.

Several special officers who had attempted the

thing had turned up missing, and never afterward had reported for duty.

And so the moonshiners went on with their illicit work in spite of governmental vigilance.

On the long, narrow beach, which ran along the coast below Sadie Sefton's cottage, were about a dozen rude shanties, and these were occupied by Jack Jarvis and his Coast Patrol, but who, ostensibly, were fishermen.

The place bore the name of Jarvishaven, and was the only place along that particular portion of the coast where a vessel of moderate burden could put in and anchor.

It was to Jarvishaven that the moonshiners of Black Run ran down by skiffs in the York River, all its illicit product, and from there, the whisky was carried by vessel to certain points, where it was easily disposed of at a handsome profit.

On the night of the storm just recorded, four men were gathered around a rough deal table, in the large, rudely-furnished kitchen of Jack Jarvis, engaged in smoking and conversation.

One of the men, roughly attired, was Jarvis himself—a large, raw-boned person, with a repulsive face and black eyes, hair and beard, that gave him a rather brigandish appearance.

The other three were members of his gang, and much the same in appearance, as far as their forbidding aspect was concerned—in fact, a hard-looking gang one would not care to encounter after dark, or in a lonely place, even if well armed.

A bottle and glasses were upon the table; also two lanterns, which afforded the light.

Outside, the combined roar of the surf and the gale made a very thunder, while blast after blast struck the rude shanty, threatening to carry it from its foundation.

"Ugh! this is a bad night!" Jarvis said, with a shiver.

"The wu'st fer months!" assented the youngest of the gang, whose name was Cass, and who stood next to Jarvis in authority. "If the beacon light does any good, we ought to run something ashore to-night."

"Not much danger, I reckon!" Jarvis growled. "Thar ain't many craft cruisin' along here this late in the season, 'cept ther reg'lar coast steamships, an' they steer wide o' heerabouts. Et orter be time fer the Sea Cat to put in hyar fer the next cargo."

"Not fer several days yet, I allow. It's a wonder Cap Cussick hain't been down from the Run, though."

"That's so. But Cap is a cute cuss, and if he scented danger, you can bet he'd not stir out of his hole. He'll be likely to pop in on us when we least expect it."

"Right you be," spoke up a pleasant voice, as the door opened, and a new-comer entered the shanty. "You know the old saying, boys—'The devil's always near at hand when you're talking about him.'"

"The captain!" ejaculated the coastmen, in one voice.

"Ay! the captain," that individual declared, as he advanced toward the fire and shook the water from his rubber coat and cap.

He was a tall, finely-proportioned individual of about thirty, with a rather prepossessing face, dark-blue eyes, and sandy hair and mustache—a person who would attract more than a passing glance in any crowd.

To look at his seemingly honest face, one would have little suspected that he belonged to a desperate band of men who bade defiance to the laws of a mighty Government.

"Wal, Cap, what brings ye down-stream sich a night as this?" Old Jarvis demanded.

"Oh! this ain't a bad night," the captain replied, with a light laugh; "just such a night as you vultures delight in, is it not? As for me, I thought I'd pull down and see if the Sea Cat had put into the haven."

"Not yet, boss, an' I opine she won't be along for several days. Got a cargo ready?"

"Yes, and a big one, too. I want to get it off out of the way as soon as possible!"

"Ah! Why so? More trouble brewin'?"

"I reckon. Read this, from my agent!"

And the chief of moonshiners tossed a letter upon the table.

Old Jarvis opened and perused it with interest. It read as follows:

"WASHINGTON, Oct. 20.
"CAPT. CARL CUSSICK:—
"DEAR SIR:—Be on your guard. There's more trouble brewing. I have been vigilant and made a discovery. The Revenue Department has received information that you are again running things boldly somewhere up the river, and have resolved upon one more attempt to break you up."

"A private steamer will leave Baltimore early this morning, and, as near as I can learn, land at Jarvishaven. The only ones on board is the crew of five, and a fellow called Kit Keith. He is only about twenty-two years old, but is sharper than lightning, and is credited with being one of the shrewdest ferrets on the revenue staff. He has promised to take charge of the job on his own hook, and furnish such information as will lead to the total rupture or capture of your gang. So look out for him. The boat is a racer and most likely will make a landing during the night."

"Yours truly, 'McCART.'

"Well, what do you think of it?" Cussick demanded.

Old Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"Humph! not much!" he replied. "I hope you ain't afeard of one feller, when ye've fooled a dozen?"

"I'm not so sure. I happen to know something about this Kit Keith," the captain replied. "He is a bad one to deal with and no mistake, especially when you try to nab him. Why, he's the same chap that broke up the Parson's gang over in the Blue Ridge, and he had only two men to help him at that. They say he does not know the meaning of the word fear; that he is as keen as a fox, and as persistent as a terrier."

"Well, that may all be, but if he comes pokin' around here I reckon that's enough of us to attend to his case," Jarvis replied, with a glitter in his evil eyes. "Bread-and-butter is bread-and-butter, an' I allow we ain't goin' ter let no pesky Government clique take it away from us."

"Spoken in the right spirit, old man; and I want you to keep a lookout for this fellow, and to go for him as you would for a shark in your nets. But there's another thing to be looked into. Jack, listen: We have a traitor in our midst. Do ye hear? A traitor! and he must be picked out and utilized for shark-bait."

"No traitor in my gang," Jarvis replied, gruffly. "Every man has been tested, and I'll stake on 'em all."

"Nor do I think there is in mine," added the captain. "In fact, I am sure there is not; but, there is a nigger in the bush somewhere, or else there would not be so much known about us and our business in Washington. Do you suspect that girl up on the cliff above here?"

"No. She's true as steel—I know that," Old Jarvis said with emphasis and with a sort of fatherly pride. "That gal would cut off her hand rather than betray any of the secrets of the gang—and don't you fergit it, Cap Cussick?"

"I am not so sure about that. I don't take quite so much stock in women as you seem to," Cussick replied, laconically. "They're very uncertain, and are apt to be about as treacherous as a red-skin. However, the girl is deucedly clever and pretty, that I admit, and I think I'll go up some day and sound her on the subject of matrimony."

"Waal, now, you'd better not!"

"Why not?"

"She carries a pop, an' kin fetch a sea-gull as fur out as a bullet will carry. She's given every one around here to understand that she don't want no company, and I allow she means putty near what she says."

"That's all the more reason why a good-looking fellow like me should try to convince her to the contrary," the captain replied. "However, that's neither here nor there. I must now be off for the return to the Run. Do you think that Roger Darrel, of the Manor, has had anything to do with giving us away?"

Old Jarvis was about to reply, when there came a quick rap on the door.

Rising, he went and opened it.

To the surprise of the gathered gang, on the threshold stood Roger Darrel, a scowl upon his face, and one of his eyes considerably discolored.

Evidently some one had been "doing him up."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE STREETS OF WASHINGTON.

We must needs make a retrogression of a month's time—*locale*, the gay city of Washington.

Time: One pleasant Saturday afternoon, when the streets were thronged with gay shoppers and sight-seers.

The store windows were resplendent with magnificent displays of newly-arrived fall goods and novelties; the stores were crowded with purchasers, and the sidewalks with the gay throng that is a feature of the Capitol City on every pleasant day.

In front of one of the largest dry goods emporiums was an especially large crowd, for the windows presented an unusually attractive appearance that won the admiration of the gentlemen strollers as well as of the fairer sex.

Of that crowd one unmistakably belonged to the shabby genteel, for, though her clothes fitted her neatly, they were the cheapest quality and plainest make.

She was a woman say of about twenty-three, and rather an attractive face, except that its expression was too bold, and the eyes had a restless, watchful expression as if to guard against surprise.

She wandered hither and thither among the crowd listlessly, and seemed more intent in eying those who surrounded her than in looking at the display in the windows.

Evidently she was not aware that she was closely watched, but she was. Her footsteps were dogged everywhere she went.

The one who shadowed her was a young man, not over two-and-twenty years of age. He was attired in a plain but serviceable business suit, wore a dark, soft felt hat, and carried a light walking stick.

He possessed a rugged, muscular figure, was of medium height, and his face was round, and pleasantly good-looking, lit up by a pair of sparkling brown eyes. His hair was brown, and his face perfectly devoid of beard or mustache.

As a whole, there was nothing in his appearance that would cause a person to give him more than a passing glance.

Nevertheless, this young man was Kit Keith, the celebrated young U. S. Revenue detective—known among the force as Retriever Kit.

He had been sauntering about that afternoon, with nothing in particular to occupy his attention, until he had espied the shabby-genteel young woman mingling with the crowd in front of the big store.

"Here's the notorious Ann Mullen, pickpocket and shoplifter. I wonder if she's up to her old tricks? She has not been out of jail a week, yet. Guess I'll keep an eye on her."

And this he proceeded to do.

For all of half an hour Miss Mullen sauntered among the crowd, without showing any inclination to be light-fingered, but at last Kit saw that she had singled out her prey in the person of an elderly lady, of aristocratic appearance, whose costume, in point of costliness and elegance, surpassed those of any of the ladies around her.

She wore, among other jewelry and adornments, a handsome gold watch, that reposed in one of those little outside pockets, which partly exposed the watch to view.

This lady was accompanied by an elderly, white-haired gentleman, who was well dressed, and walked with a cane.

The watch had evidently attracted the attention of light-fingered Ann Mullen, for she hovered close to the lady until the right chance came, when she reached deftly forward, and extracted the watch from the pocket.

No sooner had she done so than the iron grip of Kit Keith had fastened upon her shoulders.

"So, I caught you at it, did I?" he cried. "Oh, I've been watching you this half hour, Ann. Give me that watch!"

The female pickpocket looked at him in abject terror, and then obeyed.

By this time the lady and gentleman had turned around to see what the matter was, and Kit took a step forward, forcing Ann Mullen to do the same.

"Here, madam," he said, "is the watch this female crook just robbed you of. Take it, please, while I hustle gentle Ann off to the freezers."

Mechanically the lady put out her hand and took the watch; then, as she gave the detective a searching glance, she turned deadly pale, and staggered against her companion for support.

"My God! 'tis he!" she fairly shrieked, and sunk to the ground in a dead swoon.

To say that Kit's astonishment knew no bounds would be the truth.

What did it mean?

Did the woman refer to him?

Evidently, yes.

What, then, was the mystery?

This was something Kit had not the time to think about, for the crowd was massing in around him, and foreseeing the necessity of getting his prisoner out of the jam, he proceeded to do so, and succeeded.

He conducted her to the station-house, which was not far away, and after entering a complaint, hastened back to the scene of arrest.

But on arriving there, he found that the lady had been put into a hack, and, accompanied by her aged companion, had been driven away—whither, as he found after diligent inquiry, no one knew.

So he was baffled.

To have learned more of the strange woman he would have given much; but, for the present, she was lost, and he had no means of knowing where to search for her.

The singular event both puzzled and worried him, and he was left to conjecture as to her identity and what she knew of him.

For a whole week he watched every local newspaper, in the vague hope that she might advertise for him.

But, all in vain; no such an *ad.* appeared.

At last the young detective was forced to give up all hope; still he could not help thinking of the occurrence, and even in his dreams could see the woman of mystery.

One day, not far from the Capitol, he met a seedy-looking individual of the tramp order, who was shuffling idly along the avenue, as if it was immaterial to him whether Congress was in session or not.

When he saw Kit, however, he stopped stock still, thrust his hands deep down into his pockets, and surveyed the detective with a speculative scrutiny.

"I say, young feller, be you the cove as arrested Ann Mullen?" he demanded.

"Well, what of it?" replied Kit, scanning the vagabond sharply.

"'Ca'se I want to know. I've got something to tell you, if you're the same party."

"Then shout away. I'm the identical chap."

The tramp delayed a moment to answer, as if studying the detective more searchingly.

"Yas, I reckon you aire," he said, finally: "leastwise yer look like him, an' I ain't much off on figgerin' out a phiz. Ye'r a durned good-lookin' sport, and I ain't. I'm a gentleman o' leisure, an' my handle is Bum Blinker!"

"What the blazes do I care what your handle is?" cried Kit, impatiently. "I've no wish to know your family history. Stand aside!"

"Hold yer horses, now, Peter!" cried the other, coolly. "Don't start too fur ahead o' the field, or you'll get sent back. I wanter ax ye one question: Do you remember the leddy who Ann Mullen filched the ticker from?"

"Of course I remember her," Kit cried, quickly. "What of it?"

Bum Blinker's eyes twinkled.

"Waal, ye never see'd her before, did ye?"

"Not that I know of."

"She looked at yer when ye guv her the watch; then she got pale under ther gills, screeched out, 'My God! it's he!' an' then went off into a collapse."

"Yes! yes! What do you know about this strange woman? Tell me truly, and I'll give you ten dollars."

"Sure?"

"'Pon honor!"

"Waal, guess I'll make it a go. I know the woman—used to work for her. Dunno nothin' 'bout what she knows of you, but it must be suthin' portant to make her faint. She's mighty rich, an' lives in a big place called Darrel Manor, down on Virginny Coast. Ye go down the Chesapeake to where she empties into the ocean, then turn to yer right at' cruise along ther coast till ye come to a fishin'-camp called Jarvishaven. Any one that kin direct ye to where Matilda Darrel lives. That's all I know. Now fork over the money!"

Gladly did Kit do so, and Bum Blinker thrust it into his pocket, and went off chuckling. He could now "indulge" for a week.

Kit Keith was that very day commissioned to visit Jarvishaven to officially investigate the moonshiners' operations in that vicinity, but personally to learn why Matilda Darrel swooned at sight of his face.

CHAPTER IV.

DARREL'S TREACHERY.

LET US now return to the cottage of Sadie Setton, where we left the inmates the actors in an exciting scene.

The stranger who had so abruptly entered, when Sadie was seeking to escape from Roger Darrel, was Kit Keith, the Secret-Service shadower.

Of course Sadie stopped when she saw the young man blockading the doorway, and so did Roger Darrel, who had sprung forward to intercept her.

"Well," remarked Kit, "it seems there's some trouble here. What is it, young lady? Hasthat fellow been trying to molest you?"

"Oh! yes, sir. He tried to kiss me against my will, and he frightened me so that I was running to escape from the cottage, when you opened the door," Sadie replied, excitedly.

"It's a lie!" cried Darrel. "The girl's a lunatic, and go into a huff because I wouldn't kiss her!"

"That's a likely story, sir! The young lady is right, and you deserve a good cowhiding for insulting her!" Kit cried, his eyes flashing with knightly anger.

"Ho! ho! I do? Well, maybe you'd like to take the job of doing it? Who are you, anyhow, that dares take the liberty of entering here uninvited?"

"I'm a man, every inch of me, and will take particular pleasure in teaching you manners!" Kit replied, with increasing anger.

Sadie drew nearer to the young stranger, as if reassured by his responce.

"You're a contemptible cur!" the squire cried, furiously, "and you don't at once get out of here I'll break your skull!"

"No! no! Don't go and leave him here!" cried Sadie appealingly.

"Never fear, young lady. It is not my intention to leave, while he is here!" was Kit's reply. "Do you live here all alone? Have you no one to protect you?"

"Oh! no, sir; but then, you see, no one has ever offered to molest me until to-night. Every one has been very kind to me, and—and I never thought Mr. Darrel would be so ungentlemanly."

Kit started at the name.

"Mr. Darrel, eh?" he said, half aloud.

"Yes, Mr. Darrel!" cried the squire. "What do you know of Mr. Darrel, you tramp?"

"No good of you!" Kit retorted. "But, let me warn you, I'll be under the necessity of putting you out of doors if your unruly tongue is not controlled."

"Oh! please don't get into any fight with him, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Call me Kit," the young knight replied. "I'm not a person to urge a fight, but I'll not take insult from any man."

"You are a low-lived adventurer and tramp," roared Roger. "Assault me if you dare. I'll fix you for a funeral in two seconds and then have my satisfaction from the silly girl."

Hardly were the words uttered, when Kit Keith bounded forward and struck Roger a terrible blow upon the right eye that sent him spinning to the floor; then seizing him bodily, he motioned Sadie to open the door, and when she had done so, he pitched the hapless squire out into the night.

This done, he closed and barred the door, and turned to Sadie, who was now almost helplessly nervous and frightened.

"There, miss, I don't think the impudent lout will molest you again."

"Oh, you don't know him, sir. He is in a fearful rage now, and in fit condition to do any bad act. I never had any idea that he was such a bad man, I am sure. He is rich and powerful, and now that he hates both you and me, he will use every means in his power to injure us. The men at the huts, down at the beach, are not angels by any means, and for a few dollars they would come up here and murder you, I do believe. They have no friendship for strangers around these parts."

"So I have heard. But that don't annoy or intimidate me. I'll remain here a little while, until I see that they don't intend to molest you, then I'll go and hunt up some lodgings place."

"Dear me, I don't know where you'll find that. There's no habitations around here, except the shanties on the beach, my cottage, and Darrel Manor, a mile inland. The village of W— is three miles distant!"

"Oh, I'm provided for. My steamboat is lying at anchor only a couple of miles from here, and it won't take me long to reach her. I'll stay here yet a little while, and, meanwhile, there are a few questions I want to ask you, providing you will be so kind as to answer them!"

What had become of the infuriated Squire Darrel?

When he struck the ground, he lay for two or three minutes partly stunned; then, recovering his senses, he picked himself up, and shook his fist toward the cottage.

"A thousand curses on you two! I'll fix you yet before the night is over, or my name is not Darrel!"

He stalked out of the yard and away, and, reaching the verge of the cliff, he found a rug-

ged path that led to the beach below, and carefully descended it.

In due time he reached the beach, and made his way at once to Old Jarvis's cabin, where he immediately rapped on the door.

The door was opened, and he entered, as already narrated.

Of course his coming created no little surprise among the inmates, for heretofore he had held himself aloof from their society.

"Well, Darrel, what fetches you here?" demanded Jarvis, gruffly. "We were just a-talkin' about you!"

"Ah! were you? Then the old adage 'bout the devil and so forth is true, I suppose. What were you saying about me? Singing my praises, I presume."

"Well, no. We were just debatin' whether you were playin' false ag'in' us or not."

Darrel laughed dryly.

"Well, not so bad as that, I hope. Instead, I've taken the trouble to come down here through the storm, and put you onto a discovery."

"A discovery?"

"Yes."

"Well, out with it! What is it?"

"You're in danger again."

"In danger?"

"Yes. There's a stranger arrived you want to look out for. If I ain't off, he's a spy."

"Describe him!" Captain Cussick cried, quickly.

"He's a young man, twenty-two or thereabouts, smooth-faced, and answers to the first name of—"

"What?" the outlaws cried in a chorus, as they sprung to their feet.

"Kit. I did not get onto his other name."

"The same," Cussick said, looking over at Jarvis. "It's Kit Keith, the Revenue Detective. Go ahead, Darrel. Tell us all briefly and quickly. You shall be well recompensed."

"I want no recompense!" Darrel returned, haughtily. "All I want is that that fellow shall get his head broke."

"Your wish shall be gratified," the captain declared. "But, go on."

"Well, I'll tell you how it was," the squire went on, stroking his handsome mustache. "I've been keeping company for some little time with Sadie Sefton against my mother's wishes. Tonight, however, I found an opportunity to steal away from the manor for a couple of hours, and I embraced it.

"On my arrival at the cottage, judge my surprise to find this Kit there engaged in conversation on what I judged to be an important subject.

"No sooner had I become seated than this young man turned to me, and looking me over from top to toe, said:

"Young man, we can dispense with your company this evening, so please make your exit!"

Darrel's auditors roared at this, for in truth they were pleased at the supposed insult to the heir of Darrel Manor.

The squire went on:

"Well, you can believe I wasn't going to take any such insult as that, as I gave him to understand it; and the upshot of the matter was, we clinched and had it hot and heavy for some twenty minutes, this eye being the only hurt I got while I blued him up in good shape. Oh, I'm there, when it comes to the manly art."

"But the girl finally came to his assistance with a revolver and ordered me out, and I had to leave or strike her down. So I came here to see if you fellows care to take a chance at cleanin' out this Government spy. What do you say?"

"Of course we will," Cussick unhesitatingly replied. "Is he still up at the cottage?"

"He was when I left."

"Then no time must be lost. We'll nab the detective and anchor him in deep water. Get ready, boys! As for you, Darrel I am under a thousand obligations, and if I can ever do you a favor, let me know."

"You can do me one to-night if you like."

"Name it, and it is as good as done."

"Thank you. What I want is this: When you take the detective, I want you should also secure the girl, and take her with you to your stronghold, and there keep her until I can come and interview her. She's evidently in league with these Government hawks, and I think I can bring her to my terms and yours."

"It shall be as you say, by the Lord Harry! So, boys, let's off before our game escapes us!"

The six scoundrels quickly left the shanty, and began the precipitous ascent of the cliff, toward Sadie Sefton's cottage.

CHAPTER V.

THE ABDUCTION.

THE Revenue Retriever and Sadie were soon seated near the fireplace, and while Sadie listened in fear for the return of Darrel, Kit propounded the question uppermost in his mind.

"I wished to inquire," he said, "concerning these Darrels. I suppose you must know about them, as they do not live far from you."

"Indeed, I know very little," Sadie replied. "They have lived at the manor only four years, and in that time I have never entered their house."

"Quite unsociable, were you not?"

"You might think so, but Mrs. Darrel is a cold, haughty, overbearing person, whom no one could like, and I never made any attempt to cultivate her society. I got acquainted with Roger, quite by chance, and he always conducted himself as a perfect gentleman until to-night."

"Better give him a wide berth. I don't fancy the fellow. Is his father living?"

"No one knows. His father and my father mysteriously disappeared about the same time, and it has been supposed that both were murdered by the—the—"

Here Sadie hesitated and looked confused.

Kit Keith had to smile.

"Out with it," he said. "You mean by the moonshiners!"

"Well, yes. But how in the world do you know about them?"

"Oh, I've heard about them."

"Then you are a detective!" she decided, confidently.

"You hit it, miss. I have come here to break up this illicit distilling business."

"Oh, sir, you have done a very foolish thing. They will surely find you out and kill you. They are a very desperate set of men, and place no value upon a life, especially of one who is their enemy!"

"A fig for that! I don't fear them! They'll have to catch me before they get me. By the way, miss, I believe I haven't learned your name yet."

"My name is Sadie Sefton, sir."

"Sefton?"

"Yes, sir. You seem surprised. It is not such an uncommon name, is it?"

"No. It simply called to mind an incident of my detective career."

"Oh, tell me about it!"

"Well, over a year ago I had occasion to arrest a man named Sefton, for a burglary in Washington. He was sent to jail for a year. Shortly after his incarceration, an uncle of his visited him, and told him that if he'd brace up and be a man he'd get him pardoned, and make his will in his favor. Sefton laughed, and said he preferred jail, but suggested that the will be made in favor of his daughter."

"It seems the uncle did so, for he died soon after, and I heard it said that the whole fortune was left to the daughter. That's the last I ever heard of the matter."

"What was the daughter's first name?"

"That I never learned. In fact, I was so busy at the time that I had but little time to pay any attention to the case."

"Oh, could it be possible that it was my father who was sent to prison? He was not a very good man, but he was always good to me!"

"Very unlikely. Miss Sefton, The Sefton who got sent up, was—or rather gave his name as Joel Sefton!"

"Oh, sir, it's father! it's father! His name was Joel; and, oh! he's still alive, and I yet may see him again!"

"Don't hope too confidently, my dear young lady, for there may be a dozen Joel Seftons in this great country."

"But, wait! wait! I'll show you a picture he had taken in Baltimore."

She arose quickly, and went to a little bracket in one corner of the room, and returned bearing a photograph, which she placed in Kit's hands.

He had barely time to give it a glance when there was heard the rush of feet outside the cottage, and then there came a heavy crash that burst asunder the fastenings on the door, and it flew open.

The next instant Captain Cussick and his men poured into the room!

"Surrender, dog of a detective!" shouted the captain. "We've got you this time!"

Kit had had time to spring to his feet, and made an attempt to draw his revolver, but ere he could do so, he was pounced upon by five men, who bore him back upon the floor, and in almost

less time than it takes to tell it, he was bound and helpless.

"There you are, you prying puppy! We'll learn you to come prying into our affairs," the captain cried, bending over the prisoner with an expression of demoniac hatred upon his face. "Your fate will be a lesson to the United States Government to let us alone, I allow. Kit Keith's your name, is it? Well, it'll be Kit Fishmeat, mighty soon.

"So you came here with the intention of breaking up the Independent Order of Moonshiners, did you? And single-handed, too! By my soul, you're the worst idiot I ever heard tell of. There is no room on this fair earth for such as you. You've got to go to Davy Jones's locker, and there, mayhap, you will meet some of your professional kindred who have gone before. Here, boys, lay hold of the fellow and carry him to Mother Miggs's cliff and toss him over. The tide is running high to-night, and he will not have the ghost of a show for escaping."

Old Jarvis and his three men accordingly raised the young detective from the floor and bore him from the cottage.

Sadie, who had stood literally petrified with terror, now rushed forward with a cry of anguish.

"Oh, don't harm him!—please don't harm him!" she cried, imploringly, "for he is my friend!"

"Oh! he is, is he?" sneered Cussick, intercepting her and blockading the doorway. "Well, my beauty, so am I!"

"You, sir! I do not know you. You are a bad man. Step aside and let me pass."

"Well, no, sis! Can't afford to do that, as I judge you can run faster than I, and I might have some trouble to catch you again."

"What do you mean, you monster?"

"I mean that you are going to accompany me up into the hills, where you'll be safe and have a pleasant home and all the pure old mountain-dew you want to drink! It's highly improper and imprudent for you to live here all alone, for you know not what hour or minute some tough might come along and make you trouble. So you will come along with me to my inland home, where my sister will watch over and care for you, the same as though you were her own sister."

"No, no! I will not go!" Sadie cried, retreating to the further side of the room in alarm. "This is my home, and I must stay here."

"But I say, no! I say you must go. If you won't go peaceably, I'll force you to go. There, now! which will you do?"

"No, no! I'll never go. I'll die first!"

"We'll see about that!" the captain cried, as he bounded forward and seized the terrified maiden.

Strong man that he was, it was an easy matter for him to hold her, and to securely bind her. He forced her down upon a chair, and she was powerless to move, at least so far as escape was concerned.

"There you are!" he said, surveying her with triumph. "You see, it never pays for a scholar to disobey the schoolmaster, for the master is bound to come out winner. Now, don't try to run away, that's a good girl, while I bundle up some of your wardrobe, and then we'll set out for the 'retreat.'

He retired to an adjoining room, and proceeded to bundle up some of her clothing.

During his absence, Roger Darrel peered into the cottage, then softly entered and confronted poor Sadie.

"You brought this on yourself," he hissed. "You are in my power now, and I'll break you to my will, or kill you!"

Then he noiselessly withdrew.

When Cussick returned, he found Sadie in a dead swoon.

"So much the better," he muttered. "The rain will fetch her to in time enough."

In five minutes more he was mounted upon a strong-limbed horse and speeding away toward the interior, holding Sadie in his arms, as though she were a mere child.

"Ha! ha! Roger Darrel!" he cried, exultingly, "it will be a long time ere you see this prize, which you were clever enough to intrust to my care! Ha! ha! ha!"

CHAPTER VI.

FISHED FROM THE SEA.

IN the mean time, what of Kit Keith?

Probably no pen could accurately portray the feelings of the young man as he was borne from the Sefton cottage by the coast rangers.

His doom had been pronounced by the leader of the moonshiners and these wreckers had been deputized to be his executioners

That they would obey orders he had not a doubt, for their very faces proclaimed them to be wretches of the most hardened type, in whose hearts such a thing as mercy did not exist.

What then was he to do?

Drown in the mighty ocean that cast its sulken waters against that rock-bound beach?

Mother Miggs's Cliff, as it was called, was a promontory overlooking the ocean, and against which the surf rushed, even in low tide, with resistless fury, the spot being about a half-mile south of the Sefton cottage. The top of the cliff projected over its base, so that there was a sheer descent into the vortex of waters below.

Looking seaward, was an opening reached from the top of the cliff by a rugged path; also from the narrow fringe of beach, a similar rugged path, which only the venturesome would use, ascended to the opening.

This opening was, in reality, the entrance to a cave—a water-worn chamber, for there was nothing to show that it had been excavated by the hand of man.

In this cave had lived a strange old creature, who was feared and shunned alike by one and all.

She was some forty-eight or fifty years old, tall, raw-boned, and said to be of prodigious strength. In face she was anything but handsome, with gaunt visage, sharp black eyes, and furrowed forehead and cheeks, while her gray hair was always worn in a dishevelled state, and her clothing was but a conglomeration of rough garments.

Such was Mother Miggs, the lone resident of the chamber in the rocks, which no one dared or cared to enter but herself, for the superstitious coast people believed it to be the abode of evil spirits.

Every one of the coast people seemed to stand in awe of her, and few there were who cared to incur her displeasure, for her enmity meant bad luck.

Just how she managed to eke out a livelihood, no one took pains to inquire, but it was supposed to be mainly by fishing, as none of the coast denizens had reason to suppose that she had any money, and she was never known to make any purchases at the village.

On the wild, tempestuous night which opens our story, Mother Miggs was at home.

A heavy blanket hung across the comparatively narrow entrance to the cave, and kept out the wind. Within the cave there burned a fire, the smoke from which found its exit through crevices in the rocky walls.

The size of the apartment was some ten to twelve feet wide by more in depth and seven high. It was supplied with some rude pieces of furniture and a few cooking utensils. A heap of dried grass and sea-fern, in a deep alcove, and covered over with a couple of blankets, evidently did service as a not uncomfortable bed.

While the storm without raged with unabated fury, Mother Miggs sat upon a stool before the fire, her dark eyes riveted upon the flames, her thin lips compressed with an expression of stern purpose.

Her face wore a peculiarly thoughtful expression, such as one might wear when communing with the past.

"To-night is the anniversary of her death," she murmured—"just eighteen years ago, to-night! 'Twas just such a night, too. How well I remember it! how well I remember her dying shriek, and peering over the ship's rail, I saw her, by a lightning-flash, rise to the surface and put up her hands, imploring me to save her!

"Ah! that was no suicide—no suicide! Nor was it an accident. Poor Cassandra was murdered—plunged overboard into a watery grave by her husband, Kyle Kenneth, guilty wretch that he was! And when I gave the alarm, I found the demon in his state-room, to all intents asleep. Bah! 'twas only mockery! He was no more asleep than I was."

Here the woman's fingers clutched nervously together, and the passion-gleam in her eyes grew stronger and fiercer.

"Yes," she went on, "he murdered her, and would have murdered the child had I not interfered. Then, when I threatened to denounce him, he had me arrested and incarcerated in a mad-house, where my tongue could not injure him. Ha! curses on him, how he tried to force me to give up the certificate of his marriage to Cassandra, but failed! Even the strait-jacket could not attain the desired end. Then he gave up and left me, and I never saw him again until two years ago. For sixteen years I suffered the tortures of a prisoner in a mad-house; then I escaped and struck out for vengeance—struck out to avenge my own and Cassandra's wrongs.

Two years have already passed since my escape, and my last sight of his face, and nothing has been accomplished. But the time must soon come—the time must soon come!"

She arose and went to the cave entrance, and pulling aside the curtain, peered forth upon the tempest-tossed waters.

"Ugh! 'tis a terrible night," she soliloquized, "and old Jarvis and his gang will be abroad, in hopes of finding a wreck. I must not be behind them, for, though they never leave much, I sometimes secure what I most need."

She turned back into the cave, where she took one of the blankets from the bed, and throwing it about her head and shoulders, she left the cave and picked her way down the precipitous and dangerous path that led to the base of the bluff.

At last she reached the water's edge, but found that the narrow strip of beach, to the left, was so deeply submerged that it would be impossible to make her passage along the shore.

The waters lashed themselves into a fury at her very feet, and the great waves beat the cliff at her right with tremendous strokes.

"Somehow I feel strangely to-night!" she muttered, as she stood shivering at the foot of the pathway, and peered out as far upon the boundless expanse of water as the darkness would permit. "A feeling seems to possess me that I am no longer an ugly ogre, but that a new life is about to open before me—that I have henceforth something to live for besides vengeance.

"Oh, cruel ocean! but give me back my poor lost sister, and I will no longer regret the past! But, no! It is foolish to even dream of such a thing. Never shall I see poor Cassie's face again, nor that of her child, and naught remains for me but to strike for vengeance. I have waited too long already. If I cannot reach Kyle Kenneth direct, I can reach those who are dear to him. They say he is dead, but I know better. Two years ago, when I came to this coast, he met me face to face, and fled from me before I could say a word to him. Ha, ha! He never has been seen since then, and is hiding from me, like the coward he is, because he fears my vengeance. But, wait! I will find him yet, and poor Cassandra shall be avenged! I swear it!"

And the hermit of the cliff shook her clinched fist on high.

Just then, high above the roar of the storm, sounded a human cry. It came from the cliff overhead.

It reached the keen ears of the woman, and caused her to start violently.

"Ha! what new deviltry?" she cried. "The wreckers are indeed abroad to-night, and there's trouble for some poor soul!"

She stood perfectly still and listened.

A second, scarcely more—then some dark object flashed suddenly down through the air to the right of her, and there was a loud splash in the deep water at the great cliff base.

"As I thought," she hissed. "Jarvis and his gang have thrown another of their victims over the cliff. But he shall not die! Unless already murdered, I must save him!"

Heedless of her own peril, she threw aside her blanket and advanced fearlessly into the roaring vortex at the right—an act many a stronger person would have hesitated at.

Though the water reached to her armpits, she advanced boldly until she reached the spot where the dark object had gone under.

Here she stood but a moment, when the body came to the surface. It was a human form! Instantly it was in her grasp, and then toward the path she struggled with her burden.

In five minutes more she stood within the cheery firelight of her cave, and upon the grass couch placed the person she had rescued from a watery grave.

To all appearance, he was dead, but Mother Miggs knew better than that.

She set briskly to work at resuscitating the unconscious man, and soon had succeeded so well that the breast gave token of regular respiration, and color began to creep back into the white cheeks.

The rescued, it is needless to say, was Kit Keith, whom Jack Jarvis and his gang had, as they doubted not, consigned to a watery grave.

Diligently did Mother Miggs work, unmindful of her own condition, for, accustomed to coast life, she minded not a ducking even in cold weather.

She cut away the cords that bound Kit's limbs, and, in due time, after considerable rubbing and thumping, had the satisfaction of seeing him open his eyes.

As soon as he recovered consciousness he sat bolt upright and gazed inquiringly about him.

For the moment he failed to comprehend what had happened to him. When he felt and saw his wet garments, however, a full realization came back to him of the experience through which he had just passed.

"You rescued me?" he said, interrogatively, as she stood gazing steadily down at him.

"Yes. It was lucky I was at the base of the cliff, or you'd be a dead boy now."

"Reckon you're right, there. Where am I, anyhow, and what's your name?"

"I'm called Mother Miggs, the Witch of the Cliff—a person whom every one hates or fears. This is my abode."

"Indeed! Well, now, mother, I don't see anything about you to fear, and as for hating you, that would simply be impossible."

"You don't know me yet. When you do, you'll turn from me the same as all the world does."

"Not so, mother—not so!" Kit cried, heartily, as he regained his feet and thrust out his hand. "We'll shake on that, Mrs. Miggs! You have saved my life, and I'm so grateful for it, you can depend on it, that I'm your friend through thick and thin. Shake!"

The woman took his hand and gazed steadily into his face.

"You look like a good young man," she said, in a thoughtful way.

"I hope I am that!" Kit replied, with a smile.

"What is your name? You remind me of one now passed away, who was very dear to me."

"My name is Kit Keith."

"Ah! That is not the name of the one to whom I had reference. What brings you here? Who threw you over the cliff?"

"Jack Jarvis and his gang," Kit replied; "and, as for my business around these parts, I came for the purpose of discovering a gang of moonshiners."

He then made such explanations as he deemed prudent, including the assault of Roger Darrel upon Sadie Sefton, and the subsequent attack of the coast rangers upon the cottage.

"The man who ordered you thrown off the cliff was Captain Cussick, chief of the organized moonshiners of Black Run. He is a desperate character, and the men who surround him and follow his lead are equally desperate," Mother Miggs averred. "You were foolish to come here alone, for you surely can do nothing single-handed, my boy. They're too many for you—twenty to your one!"

"I don't care if they're fifty!" Kit replied, resolutely. "I've got my eyes open now, and if I don't make them hump, you can call me a wriggler. I've located the gang and their stills, and got everything ready for a raid. I can command a regiment of men from Headquarters if I want them."

"And you would need a regiment, for the headquarters of the moonshiners are almost invulnerable, and they have traps so arranged as to insare any one who may seek to ferret them out. I tell you, truthfully, my boy, that you'll gain little by meddling with the moonshiners' league. Where others have failed, you can have little hope of succeeding."

"Can't more than try," Kit responded. "I broke up a gang over in the Blue Ridge, and I can do it again. Besides that, I've got other business to attend to. So, now, if you'll show me the way out of this place, I'll go and see if Miss Sefton is all right, and then return to my boat. I haven't any money with me, but I'll return here to-morrow in disguise, and reward you."

"I want no reward, my lad. But, take Mother Miggs's advice, and be careful. If they capture you again, it will be all up with you. You had better remain here, and not venture forth until the storm is over."

"No, I must go, as soon as I dry off a little," and as he spoke, Kit divested himself of his coat, and in doing so, his right arm became bared to the elbow, and exposed to view a peculiar birthmark, the sight of which caused Mother Miggs to spring forward with a cry of surprise.

CHAPTER VII.

FOUND A RELATIVE.

NATURALLY, Kit Keith was also surprised, when the prophetess seized his arm and gazed intently at the birth-mark, manifesting considerable emotion as she did so.

The mark itself was a singular one, and had often excited Kit's curiosity. It was about two inches in length, blood red in color, and a perfect sword in shape. Indeed, the pencil of an

artist could not have drawn a more natural *facsimile* of the weapon. The mark was on the thick side of the arm, midway between the wrist and elbow, and was so vivid in color as to make it instantly noticeable as soon as the arm was bared.

Mother Miggs gazed at it full two minutes without speaking; then let go the arm, muttering:

"No, no! there can be but one like it in the world. Tell me, sir, have you always borne that mark?"

"Reckon I have; at any rate, ever since I can remember."

"Are your parents living?"

"I do not know. I never remember having had any."

"Ah! What of your early life? Tell me all you remember. Here—sit down here and dry off while you talk."

Kit obeyed.

In truth, he was deeply interested, for the old woman's agitation had aroused his curiosity and interest.

Here was more mystery, which seemed to directly concern him.

"Well," he said, when he was seated, "it is not much I can tell you in regard to myself. About the first I recollect was when I was a kid, about six years old, I judge. I was then apprenticed to an Italian organ-grinder in Philadelphia, and for three years went around with a tambourine, asking for pennies. He used to beat me unmercifully, so I ran away from him at last, stole a ride to Baltimore, and there I sold newspapers, and as I grew bigger, drifted in 'o other kinds of work, until finally I hit into the line of business I now follow."

Mother Miggs remained silent for a few minutes.

"Do you remember of possessing any little trinkets in your youth, that might have belonged to your relatives?" she finally asked.

"Only one thing—a golden locket," Kit replied. "I have always worn that suspended from a cord about my neck, and it contains the picture of one whom I have always believed might be my mother, although I had no means of knowing for certain."

"Let me see it! let me see it!" the hermitess cried, excitedly. "It may be I will recognize it!"

Kit obeyed by drawing the locket from his bosom, and holding it in the firelight so that the old woman could plainly see it.

The picture in the locket was that of a woman some four-and-twenty years of age, who had a round, attractive face and brilliant eyes—a woman whom the beholder would set down as one of a pleasant, loving disposition and sunny nature.

As she saw the locket and picture, Mother Miggs eagerly seized it, with a joyous cry, and pressed it reverently to her lips.

"'Tis the same! 'tis the same!" she cried. "I thought I could not be mistaken, even though a score-and-one years have passed since the picture was taken. Oh, Cassandra! Cassandra! Would to God you were alive and here now, instead of lying at the bottom of the sea!" and tears streamed down the woman's furrowed cheeks.

"But who was Cassandra?" Kit asked, eagerly, as he took the locket and scanned the face closely.

"She was my younger sister," the recluse said, drying her tears, "and she was also your mother!"

"My mother! Oh, are you sure?"

"Ay, my boy, sure enough. When I saw the birthmark on your arm, I was sure that you were my long-lost nephew, and now that you possess poor Cassandra's picture, there is no longer a doubt concerning your identity."

"Then you are my aunt?"

"Yes, I am your aunt, but a sorry-looking specimen of humanity to be related to a noble-appearing young man like you."

"Say not so, for I am just as glad to meet you as though you were clothed in silks and satins," Kit said, shaking her warmly by the hand. "And now draw a stool near the fire, and tell me of my father and mother, and of myself, for this sudden discovery is a wonderful one to me, who have never known what it was to have a mother's or a father's care."

"Poor boy," Mother Miggs said, sympathetically. "I know you are eager to hear all, but the news can bring you little else than a feeling of sorrow. You shall hear the story, nevertheless, while your clothes are drying:

"Years ago, before you were born into this world of trouble, the two sisters of us, Clara and Cassandra Colville, resided in the city of New York, and earned our living by sewing,

and as chorus-girls in the operas that were then produced in the city theaters or music halls. Cassandra was some years my junior, and very pretty and attractive, and had suitors by the score, some of whom were gentlemen of wealth and high social standing.

"Among these latter was one Kyle Kenneth reputedly worth a million and a half, the owner of fast horses, a yacht, and interested largely in shipping and transportation between New York and Southern ports.

"Kyle Kenneth was on everybody's tongue. Kyle Kenneth led the fashion. Kyle Kenneth spent his wealth with a lavish hand, and it was Kyle Kenneth here, and Kyle Kenneth there; everybody seemed to know him.

"Naturally my sister felt flattered at his attentions, and I rather liked him myself, for he was very polite and attentive to us, made us costly presents, and when he asked Cassandra to be his wife, the poor, overworked girl was only too glad to accept his offer.

"He installed us both in a costly up-town mansion—I as Cassandra's attendant—and for a time all went well. Then, after you were born, Kyle Kenneth began to absent himself from home, spending much of his time in the South, staying away often as long as two months at a time.

"Business" was his plea, and when he came home each time, he seemed more and more morose, sullen and disagreeable.

"Of course this made your mother grieve, and she ceased to be the happy creature she was before her marriage. Once a rumor reached us that Kyle had another wife living in the South, but we were loth to believe this, and kept the secret to ourselves.

"Finally, one day, when you were about four years of age, Kyle told us he had transferred all his business interests to New Orleans, and that the Crescent City would be our future home. Of course Cassie brightened up at this, for she would now be near her husband.

"We sailed a few days later, and had pleasant weather until, eighteen years ago this very night, the vessel encountered a terrible gale off this coast—just such a night as this, when it was blowing great guns, as the sailors say.

"Before the storm came up, Kyle Kenneth quarreled with Cassie about some trivial matter, and struck her. Then he went on deck, and did not come down to supper. It was after supper the storm came up, and I had just finished tucking you away in your little bed, when, suddenly, I missed Cassie.

"Feeling alarmed, I rushed on deck, and arrived there just in time to hear a piercing shriek—Cassie's! I rushed to the side of the boat whence had come the shriek, but no one was there. Then came a glare of lightning—I peered overboard, and saw Cassie in the waters, holding up her hands appealingly to me. I quickly gave the alarm, and every effort was made to rescue her, but to no avail. She drowned ere any aid could reach her.

"I went in search of Kyle Kenneth. He was in his state-room and the door was locked. I burst it open, and found him lying in his bunk, undressed, and feigning sleep.

"When I entered, however, he sprung up, furious with rage, and seized a pistol. I snatched it from him, and told him what had happened. He then went on deck, and professed deep grief, but I could see it was all sham, and afterward told him so, and charged him with having thrown Cassie into the sea. Of course he denied it, and cursed me roundly. That same night I saw him standing by your bed, with the look of a demon upon his face. I quickly hustled him from the room, and after that I was never out of your sight, for I well knew his aim was to put you out of the way.

"The next day, when we made a landing at Norfolk, I stole you away and escaped from the boat. Pursuit was given, and after a long chase I was overtaken, and you were torn from my arms. I was arrested, examined by a board of physicians employed by Kyle Kenneth, adjudged insane, and sent to the nearest insane asylum.

"There I was kept in confinement for sixteen long years, and what I suffered no one can ever know. Of course I lost all trace of you, and doubted not but that Kyle Kenneth had put you out of the way.

"Well, a little over two years ago I made my escape, and set forth to devote the remainder of my days in seeking vengeance upon my persecutor and the murderer of my sister—for never has a doubt existed in my mind but that Kyle Kenneth did pitch Cassandra into the sea. After some little search, I at last located Kenneth, who was still very rich, and living under an

assumed name. He was also married, and not only married, but had a grown-up son of your own age. This set me to thinking, and I had a quiet investigation made, and found that Kyle Kenneth was a bigamist at the date of your birth.

"He had married my sister, Cassandra Colville, on the twelfth day of May, and on the twelfth day of September of the same year had wedded Matilda Merchant, a rich Baltimore lady. This accounted for the singular nearness of your age and that of your step-brother.

"Well, after tracing out these discoveries I came to this place and assumed this character. I was not ready to strike, and wanted to remain incognito until I was ready. But one day I met Kyle Kenneth face to face, and he recognized me; but, coward and craven that he was, he turned and fled from me as if he were pursued by Satan himself.

"Then, immediately afterward, came the news that he had mysteriously disappeared, and that fears were entertained that he had met with foul play. At any rate, he has never been seen since."

"Do you think he is dead?"

"Not I! It is my belief that he is hiding from me, or else—"

"Else what?"

"There may be such a thing that his wife and son are keeping him in the background in order to get the use of his money," Mother Meggs—as we shall still continue to call her—said, significantly.

"That may be," Kit replied, thoughtfully. "It has been a great revelation you have made to me, aunty, and now it is my hope that I may be able to meet this inhuman father face to face. You say he has been masquerading under an assumed name?"

"Yes."

"What name?"

"For the present I prefer to keep that a secret from you. I have some plans to arrange for our mutual benefit, and until they are arranged you had best be kept in ignorance."

Kit laughed quietly.

"What if I should tell you that I already know the name?" he said.

"That is impossible," the woman replied, "unless you know more than I think you do."

"Can't a fellow guess? Now, if I hit the name first time, will you acknowledge it?"

"Yes."

"It is Darrel!"

"Very true—Judge Darrel he is known as. But, how in the world did you know?"

"I simply guessed."

"But how did you come to guess? You must know something to give you a reason for guessing."

"Well, I'll explain."

And the young detective proceeded to narrate the circumstances of his meeting with the rich lady in Washington, and his subsequent meeting with Bum Blinker, concluding by mentioning Sadie Sefton's reference to Judge Darrel's disappearance.

"I see! I see!" Mother Meggs said, thoughtfully. "Well, perhaps it is as well that you should know. But let me warn you of one important thing—be sure to keep away from Darrel Manor."

"Why so?"

"Because, if Matilda Darrel were to see you around these parts, she would spare no expense to have you suddenly turn up missing. She is a bold, scheming woman, and I've more than once suspected that she is in sympathy with the moonshiners. If you are smart enough, however, there is one thing you ought to do."

"What is that?"

"Gain a nocturnal entrance into Darrel Manor, and have a private look at Kyle Kenneth's private papers. If he is dead you are his legal heir, and entitled to everything as soon as we can arrange things."

"Very well; perhaps I can work the thing. But can you prove my parentage?"

"Yes. I possess the certificates of the marriage and of your birth."

"Good. We'll work hand in hand then. But I must be going now. When the storm abates I must get my boat out of these immediate waters lest she be discovered."

"You will return here again?"

"Yes, but when I do, it will be in one of my numerous disguises."

"Take care, lest you are suspicioned and attacked again. Both the coast rangers and the moonshiners will be on the alert now!"

"I don't think so, especially as they believe me dead. But never fear; I'll look out for Number One, aunty mine!"

Guiding her nephew to the top of the cliff, Meggs there bade him adieu and returned to her rock lodge, while Kit made his way to Sadie Sefton's cottage, which he found in utter darkness.

The door was closed and locked.

"She's gone to bed, and I'll not disturb her," he muttered, and continued on his way.

Had he but known!

CHAPTER VIII.

SADIE'S INHERITANCE.

THE next day the storm had passed away and the sun shone brightly, but the beach was strewn with *débris*, washed ashore by the waves.

During the forenoon the report was circulated by Jarvis and his gang that Sadie Sefton was missing, and had undoubtedly been lost, the theory being that she had wandered out on the beach in the storm, and had, in some mysterious manner, been caught in the surf and washed out to sea.

One of the coast rangers went so far as to declare that he had seen her walking along the shore during the height of the storm, and this seemed to confirm the theory advanced by the others.

The news spread to the pretty village of S—, situated several miles inland from the coast, and there created great consternation and anxiety, for Sadie was well known to the villagers, and universally admired and respected.

The news caused a number of the citizens to hasten to the coast, to prosecute further inquiries.

All they could learn, however, was that the cottage was found locked and Sadie gone—whether, no one knew, except as already stated—that one of Jack Jarvis's coast rangers claimed to have seen her walking along the beach, below her cottage, during the height of the storm, so the natural inference was that she had been overwhelmed by some huge wave, and washed out to sea by the tremendous under-tow.

Sadie's huge St. Bernard dog was nowhere to be found.

The news in regard to the missing girl reached Darrel Manor, while Matilda Darrel and her son, Roger, were partaking of a late breakfast.

The Manor was a large, old-fashioned, and rambling structure, two stories high, and singularly irregular with its several wings and gables.

Painted a dull lead color, and surrounded by tall silver poplar trees, at all times it had rather a grim appearance.

Within, however, all was bright and cheery, for wealth characterized every appointment.

The breakfast-room was a model of its kind, and the table-ware of the costliest description.

Mrs. Darrel, as once before described by us, was a portly personage, some years past middle age, with a haughty expression of countenance, keen gray eyes, and hair quite liberally sprinkled with threads of silver.

Roger was very like his mother, though at times he was free and open-hearted, and inclined to be sociable. Still he possessed her domineering disposition, and when angered, was not only cunning and treacherous but dangerous.

After the servant had reported the news of Sadie's disappearance, Mrs. Darrel glanced across the table at Roger, a peculiar glitter in her eyes.

"Well, said she, "you do not seem much grieved over the loss, Roger?"

"Not particularly," Roger replied, indifferently.

"Which proves that you still have some sense left," the mother declared with a commendatory nod. "It is better for the sake of our family name that the girl has disappeared, for as long as she remained at the cliff you were not your usual self."

"Family name be hanged!" Roger retorted. "What does it amount to? You're not thought any the more of because of it, I am sure."

Mrs. Darrel shrugged her shoulders.

"There is where you err," she returned. "It at least keeps me from the contaminating society of those who are my inferiors. If you had my pride, you would be more locked up than you are. Your associating with this Sefton girl has already placed you on a common level, and I can say I am heartily glad she is gone, for now you may turn your attention to those who are more your social equals."

"If you refer to May Melville, you can set your heart at rest on that score, she can never be aught to me!" Roger declared firmly. "Be Sadie Sefton living or dead, I shall always remain true to her!"

"At the pain of my displeasure, I suppose," Mrs. Darrel suggested with a sneer.

"If needs be, yes! You have no cause to be displeased. I am over age, and perfectly able to choose for myself, and I propose to do so."

"Do you know what your continued defiance of my wishes will entail, sir?"

"I do not know, and I care less. I have good reasons to believe that Sadie Sefton is not dead, and I shall not give her up."

"What reasons have you for believing her not dead?" eying him with quick suspicion.

"I matters not. I have reasons, and that is all I have to say."

"Then you refuse to give her up?"

"I do, most assuredly. I love the girl, poor though she is, and I shall yet make her my wife, if she still lives."

"This defiance is intolerable, Roger," Mrs. Darrel said angrily, "and I will not tolerate it. I have ever been indulgent to you, and to have you now turn against me, in this unfeeling manner, is more than I can or will bear. I shall send for my lawyer this very day, and have a new will made. I will disinherit you."

Roger paused long enough in his repast to give vent to a dry laugh.

"Disinherit me, eh?" he repeated.

"Yes, I'll disinfect you!"

"But, pray, mother, how are you to do that, when you have nothing to leave behind? I really do not understand. The bulk of father's money lies in the bank at S—, and there it will remain, until the bank officials are satisfied that father is dead. Neither can this estate be sold without my consent, for, since father left no will behind, I am as much of an heir as you. So I don't see how you are going to particularly disinfect me or kick me out of doors, when I have as much interest here as you have!"

Mrs. Darrel bit her lip, and her eyes flashed in anger.

"You shall see. You may not be aware that a will has been found!" she rejoined.

"Bab! I don't believe it! Didn't we make a diligent search without finding a trace of such a document? No, no, mother! That won't work. There's no earthly use of your trying to bulldoze me, for I'm bound to have my own way."

Mrs. Darrel was about to make a declaration of war when the servant re-entered, bearing a silver card salver, upon which was a business card:

A. COBURN,

ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW,

Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Darrel took the card and surveyed it thoughtfully.

"I wonder who he can be, and what he can want here?" she mused. Then aloud: "Show the gentleman in here, John," and a gentleman of business bearing was soon ushered into the breakfast-room and given a seat.

He was some fifty years of age, well dressed, and sported an enormous pair of iron-gray side-whiskers.

"I believe I have the honor of meeting Mrs. Judson Darrel?" he said, when seated.

"Yes, sir, I am Mrs. Darrel. You, I perceive by the card, are Mr. Coburn, from Washington."

"Just so, madam. I was directed to you by your Washington attorney, Mr. Black."

"Ah, yes, I see. Of what service can I be to you, sir?"

"Well, possibly you can assist me in finding a person I am in search of. Mr. Black said he presumed you might be able to. A large fortune in money has been left to a young lady, who is supposed to be living somewhere in this region, and I have been commissioned to look her up."

"You see, the case is like this: There were two brothers, one considerably the senior of the other. The elder was very rich, while the younger was a miserable scamp, confined in jail for a burglary."

"The elder brother, being in failing health, visited the younger in prison, and offered not only to secure his liberation, but also to make his will in his favor, providing the junior would promise thereafter to lead a better life."

"This offer was recklessly refused; but the prisoner was thoughtful enough to suggest that the will be made in favor of his daughter, to which the elder brother agreed, and took his departure."

"The elder brother kept his promise. He made his will in favor of the prisoner's daughter, and I was appointed executor and adminis-

trator, with full power to act. Not long afterward, the elder brother died.

"As the entire fortune left behind was in money, I had to give bonds in a large sum when the money was paid over to me. I had a great deal of trouble to get responsible men whom the Orphan's Court would accept to go on my bond. I succeeded, though, and have since held the money. The heiress's father broke jail, and I had no clew to work upon except that in his cell was found a scrap of paper bearing your name. I remembered of having heard Lawyer Black mention the name, and, going to him, he gave me your address, and presumed I could gain some information of you. I am very busy with my practice, and want to get this matter off my hands as soon as possible."

"But you haven't mentioned any names," Mrs. Darrel reminded. "How am I to know whom it is you wish to find?"

"True enough. The name is Sefton."

"Sefton!"

Mrs. Darrel started and glanced at Roger, upon whose face there was an uninterpretable expression.

"Yes, ma'am—Joel Sefton!" the lawyer said.

"And the daughter's name?"

"Sadie."

Mrs. Darrel leaned back in her chair and drew a long breath of surprise.

Here was an astonishing revelation, to be sure!

Sadie Sefton, whom she had snubbed and despised because she was poor, was, after all, an heiress!

The haughty mistress of Darrel Manor dare not give a second glance toward her son, for she felt that he would return a smile of exultance and triumph.

"It appears you do know the young lady?" Lawyer Coburn observed, stroking his long side-whiskers.

"Yes, indeed," Mrs. Darrel replied. "Sadie is a model young lady, and has lived alone in her cottage a short distance from here ever since her father mysteriously disappeared, two years ago. That is, until last night, when she also mysteriously disappeared."

"Indeed! How is that?"

"Well, you see," and the lady smiled complacently, "her disappearance has caused a lively sensation in the neighborhood. The theory is that she wandered out in last night's storm, and, becoming bewildered, fell over the cliff into the ocean, and was washed out to sea. This is the general belief. There are two persons, however, who know better."

"Ah! Who are they?"

"Myself and my son here."

"Indeed? But, pardon me, if I fail to understand."

"Well, you see, it's a little family secret, and we have not seen fit to disabuse the neighbors of their opinion for the present. You see, their surprise will be all the better by and by. But I will explain: Miss Sefton is engaged to my son, and has left for New York to secure her wedding trousseau."

"Indeed? This is a surprise. When will she return?"

"We do not anticipate her return until two days before the wedding-day—which is fixed for two weeks hence."

"Hum! Well, really, this is disappointing. I can ill afford to wait that length of time, and as for another trip here immediately, that will also inconvenience me."

"Perhaps that can be arranged. Miss Sefton can meet you in Washington on her return."

"But I shall not be there for possibly two months, having an Eastern estate to settle up."

"How large is the sum of Miss Sefton's inheritance, sir?" Roger asked, speaking for the first time.

"Thirteen thousand dollars."

"I infer from what you have said, that you brought the amount with you to settle with her here?"

"I did."

"Then cannot some arrangement be made, so that the money can be left in trust for her? My mother and I jointly own this estate, valued at fifteen thousand dollars, and besides have a bank-account of seventy-five thousand dollars. If you like, you can deposit the money with us, and we will give you a joint receipt of trust, so that the money would be safe for Miss Sefton on her return."

Coburn shook his head gravely.

"That would be a very unbusiness-like way of doing business," he answered. "I see no other way than that I shall have to return home, and your affianced will have to wait until I can get an opportunity to see her in person."

"Could you wait here a couple of days?"

"Well, yes, in an emergency I think I could possibly spare that time. But why?"

"I've an idea Miss Sefton expected to spend a day or two with an acquaintance in Philadelphia. I could perhaps reach her there by telegraph, and have her return home at once."

"Very well. If you can do that I will wait, as I want to get the business off at once. My bondsmen are also equally anxious to be released. So if an early settlement can be arrived at, so much the better."

"All right. I'll saddle my horse, ride to the nearest telegraph station, and send a dispatch. In the mean time you must accept of the hospitality of Darrel Manor, and make yourself at home, for the accommodations at S— are of a very inferior character, and I could not think of allowing you to go there."

The attorney expressed his thanks for the hospitable offer, and accepted an invitation to breakfast.

Immediately after the meal was over, Mr. Coburn was shown into the parlor and left to amuse himself, while in another room, Roger and his scheming mother held an earnest consultation.

Later on Roger mounted his horse, and rode rapidly away from the Manor.

He did not head toward the nearest telegraph station, however, but toward the distant forest-crowned hills, amid whose fastnesses the headquarters of the Moonshiners' League was located.

"Sadie Sefton must be mine, now!" he muttered. "There shall be no tomfoolery about it, either! That thirteen thousand dollars must not be lost, and it sha'n't be, not even if—"

He left the sentence unfinished, but there was a wicked gleam in his eyes that spoke volumes.

CHAPTER IX.

BUM BLINKER'S CALL.

MRS. DARREL, some two hours after her son's departure, was seated in the parlor, making herself agreeable to the Washington attorney, when a kitchen domestic, on whose florid countenance "cook" was plainly written, bolted abruptly into the room, with arms akimbo, and eyes flashing with anger.

"If ye pl'aze, mum," she cried, "it's meself as is wishin' yez to come to the kitchen, to oncet!"

"What is the matter, Bridget?" her mistress demanded.

"Shure, an' it's enough's the matter, so it is! There be a spaldeen av a tramp in the kitchen, a-makin' himself as free as a lord, an' shure he says he won't go out until he has an intervoo wid yerself!"

"We'll see about that!" Mrs. Darrel decided. "Excuse me, Mr. Coburn, while I see what is gone wrong."

"Certainly! certainly!" the lawyer replied.

"A mighty fine woman," he added to himself, after she had gone. "If I was a marrying man, I should feel inclined to think twice before looking further than the charming Mrs. Darrel!"

He tipped back in his easy-chair, and indulged in pleasant thoughts of the mistress of the Manor, when a paper floated down into his lap.

From what source it came he had no means of knowing, for, on looking sharply around, he could detect no other human presence in the room than himself.

Not without a deal of curiosity, he examined the paper, and found it to be the fly-leaf of a book, upon which was written in pencil:

"Pay no money to the Darrels under any circumstances! I believe Sadie to be a prisoner and in their power. At any rate, she has not gone to New York. Be on your guard that you are not robbed. Will see you later."

"KIT KEITH, Detective!"

Mr. Coburn could scarce repress an exclamation as he read the note.

"Kit Keith here?" he mused, for the young Revenue Retriever was well known to him by reputation. "What in the world is he doing here, and where is he?"

He arose and looked behind every article of furniture that could hide the author of the note from view, but all in vain.

He was the only occupant of the room.

Here was certainly a mystery. At least it was a mystery to him, and he sat down to ruminante over it.

Meanwhile, let us follow Mrs. Darrel.

When, accompanied by Bridget, she reached

the kitchen, she saw a specimen of the unmistakable tramp species, seated upon a work-table, engaged in munching away at one of Bridget's freshly-baked pies, and, judging by his contented expression, it suited his appetite to a nicely.

The fellow was none other than Bum Blinker, whom Kit Keith had met in Washington—the same individual, but now, if anything, dirtier, more ragged and dissipated in appearance than then.

As Mrs. Darrel entered the kitchen, he looked up, and nodded familiarly.

"Howdy do, Matilda?" he saluted. "Glad ter see you! Lookin' jest as hale and hearty as ever, I perceive."

"Sir! what do you mean by entering my house and conducting yourself in this manner?" Mrs. Darrel angrily demanded, turning white and red by turns.

"Your house?" chuckled Blinker, taking another nip at the pie. "Who said it was your house?"

"I said it was my house, sir, and I want you to get out of it instantly, or I'll call for assistance to put you out."

"Better not, Til. You know I'm a bad man, and I carry a pop. Set down and make yourself sociable, or it'll be the worse for you!"

His tone, as well as his words, implied a threat, and she knew it, evidently, for she turned to the domestic.

"Bridget, you can run up-stairs and see the chambermaid a few minutes," she suggested.

Bridget accordingly left the room, and then Mrs. Darrel turned upon the cool intruder, fiercely.

"Now, sir, be good enough to explain what brings you here!" she cried, fury stamped on every feature.

"Oh, several various things," the tramp answered, good-naturedly. "One thing, I had a kind of a hankerin' to see the old place again. Then, too, my wardrobe was gettin' depleted, my stomach empty, as well as my bank account, and so methought I'd wander back again. Ain't yer glad to see me, Til? Ain't ye got a couple o' fatted calves ye'r goin' to kill, on account o' the prodigal's return?"

Mrs. Darrel's eyes now fairly blazed with passion.

"Joel Sefton!" she cried, "I thought I paid you to leave this part of the country and never return!"

"Sh! not that name!" he said, with a serious comic gesture. "Joel Sefton lies buried in the lock-up of a distant city. You are now in the presence of Bum Blinker, Esq., gentleman of leisure!"

"Yes, I know you've been in jail," she hissed, "and if I'd known it while you were there, you'd never got out!"

"Humph!" and Blinker looked disgusted; "no jail strong enough to hold me! Love laughs at locksmiths, they say, and you know I worship you, or at least I do your money—which is all the same. Howsomever, notwithstanding, nevertheless, that's neither heer nor there. One thing that brought me back to these parts war to see my gal, Sadie!"

"You'll never see her!" Mrs. Darrel said, triumph in her tone. "She was drowned during the storm last night!"

Blinker put one finger to his left eye, and drew down the lower lid.

"D'yee see any green thar?" he chuckled. "Waal, I reckon not, Matilda—nary green, you bet! I've heerd them theories, but they don't go down my gullet. Thar's one person knows whar my Sadie is, and he's got to produce her, or I'll make crow-fodder out of him. He's yer stuck-up son!"

"Roger knows nothing about your girl!" Mrs. Darrel cried, haughtily.

"Oh, don't he? Waal, jest wait till I get hold of him, and you'll find out."

"You scoundrel! Dare you threaten my son in my presence? Leave the house, sir, or it will be the worse for you!"

"Git out! Who's afraid of you? I won't go till I git good and ready!" Blinker declared. "You'd better act a leetle more perlite, or it may be the worse for you, instead of me!"

Mrs. Darrel winced at this, and then her face grew dark with passion once more, as she cried:

"You came here expecting to get money?"

"You bet!" replied Blinker, emphatically. "You couldn't have hit the nail straighter on the head if you had tried. Money is the very jewel I'm after, for, 'pon honor, I haven't seen the shadow of a red cent in a month!"

"Well, you're not likely to in another month,

if you expect to get it from me. Not one more penny will you receive from me, Joel Sefton. I bargained with you to leave this part of the country, never to return, and I paid you well. Now you have come back, expecting to bleed me out of more money, but you have come in vain!"

"Oh, I have, have I?" Blinker sneered. "Well, if that's the case, I suppose I'll have to make a raise in some other direction. By the way, how's the guv'nor getting along these times?"

"He died over a year ago. It would have been a benefit to the country if you had died, also."

"Mebbe you think so, but, you see, I have a different opinion. So the judge is dead, eh? Waal, I dunno about that. You never were remarkable fer tellin' the truth, and I'm of the opinion that you're tryin' to shut my eye up now. Howsoever, notwithstanding, nevertheless, it don't matter. I want money, and you're goin' ter give it to me!"

"Not one farthing! and if you don't get out of this neighborhood at once, I'll have you arrested!"

"Humph! What fer?"

"You are an escaped jail-bird, and are wanted in Washington!"

Bum Blinker laughed loudly.

"Arrest and be hanged!" he grunted. "Look out fer me, tho'. I ain't nobody's fool. By-by! I'll see you later!"

And, leaping from the table, the noble specimen of the *genus* tramp snatched another pie from a shelf, and made his exit from the kitchen in surprisingly quick order.

Mrs. Darrel, now grown pale with alarm, rushed to the door and called after him, but, paying no heed to her, he hurried from the grounds, munching the pie as he went.

"Good heavens! I did wrong not to give him money!" the scheming mistress of the Manor gasped, as she stood with pallid countenance, watching him depart. "I wonder if he will dare betray me?"

CHAPTER X.

REUBEN SWEET, OF CONNECTICUT.

The village of S—, which was about three miles from Darrel Manor, contained nearly five hundred inhabitants. Having no railway facilities, its chief dependence was the farming country surrounding. It was, however, not particularly prosperous.

The people were, of course, both good and bad, and it was not strange that the dwellers of the hill districts should bring their moonshine whisky in exchange for groceries.

The "Horn of Plenty" tavern, run by a man named Howler, was the only place in the village where the ardent was regularly retailed, and, as may be judged, the place was well patronized.

On the evening following the events last narrated the Horn of Plenty was more than usually full, for a gang of "up country" men had come to town, and several of Jack Jarvis's coast rangers had come up to mix with the crowd.

There also was present a man attired in a plain business suit, black soft felt hat, and white shirt and collar, sporting a full gray beard and hair silver gray.

This stranger kept rather aloof from the carousers, for he was quietly seated in an out-of-the-way corner and appeared absorbed in nothing so much as a brand new corn cob pipe which he was leisurely smoking.

He wore spectacles, carried a stout hickory cane, and to all appearances was some fifty years of age.

Another noticeable person who disported himself about with no little flourish was Bum Blinker.

In some way he had succeeded in getting enough moonshine to make him tipsy, and he was cavorting about with the friskiness of a half-grown lamb.

"Ye tell me my gal aire gone up ther spout!" he shouted. "I tell yer no! Thar ain't a word o' trutn in it. She war no sech darned fool as to go s'ootin' out inter a storm, tumble off a cliff, an' git drowned! She hev lived too long on ther coast fer that, an' he's a liar who sez there is. My gal hev been kerried off by some cuss, an' ther job lays atwixt three galoots!"

Several times Blinker paraded up and down the room, shouting this harangue, and shaking his fists about in a promiscuous manner.

Finally he was interrupted in one of his rounds by Big Pete, a burly up-river rough, nearly as huge and ferocious of aspect as was Howler, the proprietor of the Horn of Plenty.

"See here, Joel Sefton!" Big Pete growled,

seizing the bummer by the shoulder, "ye'r'makin' ter danged much noise for a man o'yer size. You've been prancin' up and down here long enough, a-shootin' off that some one hez carried off your gal, an' ye say it's one o' three persons as did the job. Now, which is them three persons? We, ther people, want ter know, and don't ye fergit it!"

"Dunno as it's anything to *you*," growled Sefton, sobering up. "It ain't *you* I mean!"

"I don't care a tinker's pot for that. You spit out who ye do mean, or I'll take it upon myself to smash you!"

"Mebbe ye think I'm afeard of you!" returned Sefton, spunkily. "You an' I was allus on good terms, Big Pete, an' never had a quarrel; but, jest the same, I ain't afraid o' you!"

"Well, you just tell me who ye'r'slingin' hints on, concernin' carryin' off yer gal, or I'll make you the sickest-sucker as ever hung around this burg."

"Well, I ain't afeard to express my opinion," Sefton declared, evidently believing that discretion was the better part of valor. "I'm sart'in my gal has been carried off, an' the job lays between three men. One of them aire Roger Darrel, another is Jack Jarvis, an' t'other is Cap Cussick. Thar! now, are you satisfied?"

Big Pete uttered a savage oath.

"So ye accuse the captain, do ye?" he roared. "Waal, I want yer to know that the captain is a friend of mine. D'ye know what he'd do ef he war here?"

"I don't know, nor don't keer!" was the retort. "One of the three has got my gal, an' I'd just as lief suspect one as t'other."

"Well, I'll tell you what the captain would do if he was here—he'd smash ye all over the floor, ef he didn't kill ye, an' bein's he's a friend of mine, I'll jest about look out for his interests!"

And with that he hauled off and struck Sefton a fearful blow in the face.

It was a stroke that would have felled an ox, and Sefton went crashing to the floor, blood gushing from his mouth and nostrils.

He quickly staggered to his feet, however, a vengeful light burning in his eyes.

"You accursed low-lived moonshiner!" he yelled, "I'll get square with you for this. By the God above me, I'll have your heart's—"

He did not finish the sentence, for another fearful blow from Big Pete's fist laid him out senseless on the floor.

The ruffian then dragged his victim to the door of the saloon, and pitched him headlong into the street.

Whether Sefton was dead or alive, no one left the saloon to see.

The incident of the knock-down evidently soon passed out of the minds of the revelers, for the orgies went on with unabated hilarity.

During the evening, Hen Howler substituted a bartender for himself, and sauntered over to where the man with the gray beard was seated.

"Well, old man, you 'pear to be takin' it sorter easy, ain't ye?" he said.

"Yas, sorter," was the reply. "Been kinder lookin' over the crowd to see if I couldn't pick out some man who could give me some pointers."

"Pointers, eh?" and the landlord eyed him keenly. "So you are a detective?"

The old man laughed heartily.

"Waal, no," he said, "not as any one knows of. I am Reuben Sweet, from Connecticut. Heer's my card."

Howler took the extended card, and glanced at it. It read:

"REUBEN SWEET,
Wholesale Dealer in Wines & Liquors,
Saybrook, Conn."

"Ah! you're in the liquor trade, eh?" Howler observed.

"Yas, this last twenty years," was the reply. "Handled a heap of stuff in that time."

"I should presume so. Up this country on business?"

"Waal, yas. I was told, on the quiet, ef I'd fetch my boat up along this coast, I could pick up a cargo of 'moonshine' at a pretty reasonable figger; so as my stock was runnin' low, I thought I'd try the experiment, ye see."

"I understand," Howler said, drawing a chair to hand and sitting down. "And I opine you've come to purty nigh the right locality, old gent, providin' you've got the stuff to pay for it."

"The 'stuff's' all right," Sweet assured, with a nod of the head. "I always pay cash."

"Have you made any purchases yet?"

"No. Only just arrived, this afternoon. That is what I have been sittin' round here for, to see if I couldn't pick out some one who could put me onto a bargain."

"Well, old gent, since you appear all on the square, I can help you out, or, at least, I know a fellow that can."

The proprietor of the Horn of Plenty then called out the name of Big Pete, who stalked forward, and was formally introduced to Reuben Sweet, of Saybrook, and shown his card.

"Mr. Sweet has come to these parts, Pete," said Howler, "with a view to purchasing a consignment of mountain-dew, to take back with him to the Nutmeg State. His boat is anchored down along the coast, in readiness to ship a cargo, and here's a ripe chance for a sale. Where's the captain?"

"Up the Run, I reckon," Big Pete replied, surveying Mr. Reuben Sweet rather suspiciously.

"How much stock has he got on hand?"

Pete shrugged his shoulders.

"More'n he'll be likely to get rid of right away. The stuff will keep, tho', providin' the captain shells out the money to the boys. How much d'ye want to purchase, stranger?"

"Waal, that depends su'thin' on the price. From fifty to a hundred bar'l's, or thereabouts."

"Pay cash?"

"Sart'in."

"Well, ef you mean business, ye kin go 'long wi' me up to the Run to-night and see the captain. Reckon he'll be glad to make a sale like that."

"Is the stuff full proof?"

"You bet! There's no better stuff made. Howler, here, has some of it. Ye kin see what it is."

"Just let me have a taste. I'm a purty good judge of the juice."

Whisky was ordered, and Reuben sipped a glass of it leisurely, occasionally smacking his lips with a gusto.

"That's prime!" he declared. "No chemicals about that. I'll take a hundred bar'l's of it at thirty-five cents!"

"I reckon not. Nothin' less'n forty will touch it!"

"Not for a hundred bar'l's?"

"I reckon not."

"Waal, then, I reckon, as ye say, that I'll have to look further," Reuben said, tipping back in his chair and relighting his pipe. "Can't afford to come all the way from Connecticut and pay them figures. I'll take a hundred bar'l's, delivered at Jarvishaven, at thirty-five, but I won't pay a cent more."

And the old man appeared resolute in his decision.

Howler and Big Pete exchanged glances.

"You'd better take him to the captain," the former said. "I'll go the drinks he'll accept the offer on account of the size of it."

"Well, maybe he will," Big Pete admitted. "So you can go 'long wi' me, old gent, an' maybe we can fix ye out. The captain ain't werry hard to deal wi'."

"Very well. What time will you be ready to start?"

"Oh, not till after midnight. Have to be kind of careful, you know."

"Correct. I understand. While waiting, I'll go and look the town over and hire me a horse. I'll be back long before you are ready to start."

The little party broke up, and Reuben Sweet left the tavern.

"If everything works right," he muttered, when out in the air, "I'm in for a scrap. I wonder what has become of Sefton? The poor devil got it bad."

He wandered leisurely down the lone main street of the village, his mind busied in forming plans of action, when suddenly a man stepped from a shadow and grasped him by the shoulder.

It was Joel Sefton, looking almost hideous in the bright moonlight, covered with clotted blood as he was.

"Halt!" he commanded, in a hoarse voice. "Are you the old man who was in the tavern to-night?"

"Yes."

"You see me get laid out?"

"I did."

"Is Big Pete in there yet?"

"He is."

"All right. That's all I want to know. I'm goin' to kill him when he comes out."

"No, you are not!"

"Why not? What the deuce have you got to say about it?"

"Lots! If you kill him to-night, you seal the fate of your daughter!"

"How do you mean?"

"Listen, and you shall know. Do you remember a young man whom you accosted in Washington a few weeks ago, and gave some information to, concerning Matilda Darrel?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Do you know who that young man was?"

"No. Who?"

"Kit Keith, the Revenue Detective."

"The deuce you say! And who're you?"

"The same chap! Listen: I am here, ostensibly to purchase 'moonshine' whisky, but, in reality, to break up this gang of moonshiners. I am going to the Run to-night with Big Pete to make a supposed purchase of whisky, but, in reality, to get the lay of the ground. While there I will find and rescue your daughter, providing you promise to remain here, and keep yourself quiet."

"I promise, and may God grant that you succeed in your undertaking!" Sefton said, earnestly. "I will go to my cottage, and await you there."

"No more whisky?"

"Nary drop, 'pon honor!"

Having a saddle horse, and looking well to his weapons, the retriever returned to the Horn of Plenty, ready for his daring nocturnal venture.

CHAPTER XI.

IMPRISONED.

LET US return to Sadie Sefton, who, when we last saw her, was being spirited away by the moonshiner chief, Captain Cussick.

At the time, Sadie, it will be recalled, was insensible.

When consciousness returned, she found herself lying upon a bed in a plainly but neatly-furnished room.

At first, on awakening, she was unable to comprehend the situation, but when her adventures of the previous night dawned upon her, and she realized that she had been carried off by Captain Cussick, she buried her face in a pillow and wept piteously.

By and by, however, her curiosity got the better of her grief, and drying her tears, she arose and looked around her.

Her room was not a large one, but contained a door and two windows, the latter overlooking a dismal piece of wooded ravine, where there were no habitations in sight.

The windows were guarded on the inside by heavy wooden bars, which were spiked to the casing.

The door was also securely fastened on the outside.

The floor of the room was covered with a rag carpet, and the furniture consisted of a comfortable bed, a couple of chairs, a table, and a washstand. There were also several pictures on the walls, and a few old magazines upon the table.

After washing herself and combing her hair, Sadie sat down by the window, and gazing down into the gloomy ravine, thought over her experiences of the last few hours.

"Poor Mr. Keith!" she murmured, tears filling her eyes. "I wonder if they really did drown him? Oh, it is terrible, if they have! He was so nice and good, and I thought in him I had found a true friend. He knew something about father, too. Oh! I do so hope they did not harm him; but, well I know that I hope in vain, for Jack Jarvis and his gang are not the ones to show mercy! And, oh! that villain, Roger Darrel. It was he who betrayed Mr. Keith's presence at the cottage, and I doubt not it was he who caused me to be carried off to this lonely place."

"Here I am, a prisoner among wretches of the worst type, and who, oh! who will ever come to my rescue? Alas! no one! If Mr. Keith has been drowned, I have not another friend in the world to search for and rescue me!"

The thought was certainly a heartrending one, and despite her efforts to be brave, she was forced to weep bitterly.

Something like an hour later a key turned in the lock, the door opened, and Captain Cussick entered the room.

After locking the door after him, he turned, folded his arms across his breast, and surveyed his captive in triumph.

"How is my pretty bird this morning?" he asked. "What! been crying? Pshaw, how foolish of you, my dear! You'll spoil your pretty eyes by crying."

"Sir!" cried Sadie, passionately, as she sprung to her feet, "leave my presence! Is it not enough that you have imprisoned me here in

this lonely place, that you should come here to torture me?"

"Tut! tut! It is not to torture you that I come," Cussick replied. "Indeed, that would be the last thought to enter my mind, Miss Sefton."

He spoke now in a more respectful tone.

"I came to see if there was anything I could do for you."

"Nothing!" Sadie returned, haughtily. "You are a despicable wretch, and I loathe and despise you! You caused the death of my young friend, Kit Keith, and that is all sufficient to make you a human monster in my sight, let alone all your other badness."

"True, I caused the death of the Government spy because I was forced to do so for self-protection. He came here to break up our business, and thereby take the bread from our mouths, and he well deserved the fate which overtook him. But, despite this, Sadie, the devil is not always so black as he is painted. It was not of my own accord that I brought you here, nor have I any personal aims to further, so far as you are concerned. I was hired to abduct you by your lover, Roger Darrel."

"My lover, indeed! He is as vile a wretch as yourself!" Sadie bravely retorted.

"Be that as you like, it was he who was the cause of your abduction; it was he who informed of Kit Keith's presence at your cottage. He paid me a good sum to bring you here, and I did so. But that does not signify that you must necessarily remain here for any considerable length of time."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Then I will make matters plainer: Darrel means to possess you, by fair means or foul, and hired me to bring you here, in the belief that I would assist him in forcing you to become his wife. But in this he has reckoned without his host, I can assure you."

"For a long time it has been my desire to get young Darrel in my power, for, by holding him a prisoner, I can compel him to pay a large ransom for his release. So you see, when he wanted me to bring you here, I foresaw a way by which I could entrap him, and make his arrogant mother pony up a round sum for his re-appearance."

"But in what way does all this concern me?" Sadie demanded.

"This much: That when Darrel comes here, he will be made a prisoner, then, as soon as I have secured the money from his mother, you will be set at liberty."

"If you propose to liberate me at all, why not do so as soon as you capture him?"

"Oh! well, I'll see about that. Perhaps I will arrange it that way. So cheer up now. I'll send my sister in with some food directly."

And bowing, the captain withdrew, locking the door after him.

"I wonder if he means what he said?" Sadie murmured, as she seated herself once more by the window. "If so, my lot will not be so hard as it at first seemed. I pray to God that I may escape!"

About an hour later the door opened, and a woman entered, bearing a tray of food, which she deposited on the table, and then quickly locked the door.

She was several years Sadie's senior, of short, stout build, and rather prepossessing of appearance, albeit her face was dark almost to swarthiness, and her eyes and hair jet-black.

She was neatly attired, and diamond earrings pended from her ears.

"There's yer grub!" she said, turning to Sadie. "So you are the woman Cussick's brought home, are ye?"

"Oh! miss, it is not my fault, indeed it is not!" Sadie replied, ready to burst into tears. "He abducted me from my home against my will."

"Oh! that's like him," the woman replied, with a sneer. "He ain't satisfied with me, but I'm boss here, and I won't have no interlopers. So ye kin make up yer mind if the captain calculates to put you in my place, you'll get this!"

And the woman drew a dagger from the folds of her dress and flourished it in the air, while her face grew dark with passion.

"But, ma'am, the captain has no such intentions," Sadie replied. "He intends soon to set me at liberty, he says."

"Oh! that's a likely story! He's no such a fool as that. He only told you that to get you in a better humor, you see. I know him like a book. He's stuck on that baby face of yours, and intends to put me out of the house and marry you. But he shall never do it, I swear it. I'll kill you first!"

"Oh! you must not feel hard toward me!"

Sadie said, pleadingly, "please don't! I am sure the captain has no such intentions as you intimate; and, even had he, it would not matter, for I would never marry him—no! never!"

The dark woman broke into a sarcastic laugh.

"You're a fool!" she said. "He would force you to—force you to, as he did me!"

"Then you are his wife?"

"Yes. Who else do you suppose I am?"

"He said his sister would fetch my meals!"

"Ah! did he? The lying hound! He has no sister. Oh! but I'll fix him for this! And, mind you, me lady, if he pays you any more visits, I shall know it, and your life will pay the forfeit!"

And turning, she unlocked the door, and left the room, a look of hate incarnate upon her face.

Poor Sadie!

Here was another source of trouble that kept her in a state of torment the livelong day.

She saw that the wife of Cussick was of a fierce and jealous disposition, and a woman who would not hesitate to do an act of violence, when frenzied with jealous rage.

Sadie shuddered and wept when she thought of her peril and her perfect powerlessness.

CHAPTER XII.

ROGER RUNS AMUCK.

DARK RUN, where the moonshiners' league had their headquarters, was a lonely, up-the-river ravine, surrounded by hundreds of acres of dense pine and hemlock woodland, and was so situated as not to be easily found.

No roadway led to the ravine, but a deep, slow running creek wormed its way from the moonshiners' head-quarters to the river below, which gave easy access to the ocean at Jarvis-haven.

The grain from which the liquor was distilled was brought into the camp by big skiffs at night from below.

The headquarters consisted of some half a dozen shanties, built in an open space and in a semicircle, and a large barnlike structure wherein the stills were located and the liquor was manufactured.

Of the shanties Captain Cussick occupied the most pretentious one, while the others were divided up between the gang.

There were twenty of the moonshiners here, banded together in a sort of co-operative league, Cussick being the ruling spirit and general manager.

Part of the men were regularly employed at the still; another portion worked as grain transports, and still another portion did guard duty at either approach of the ravine to the headquarters—for the latter could only be reached by either coming up or down the ravine, owing to the precipitous hills that arose on either side.

In one side of the ravine, an immense cellar had been dug, the entrance being guarded by ponderous doors. In this cellar the whisky was stored as fast as manufactured, and held until sold.

Under Captain Cussick's supervision the whole business was run in a systematic manner, and the fact that the plant was located in a wilderness and reached by no wagon road, had been one reason why the revenue officers had been unsuccessful in locating the place.

When Captain Cussick left his house after his brief interview with Sadie Sefton he made his way to the still-house, where half a dozen men were engaged in drawing liquor from one of the great vats and barreling it.

As the captain entered the place, the familiar song of the distiller greeted his hearing—the voices of the singers blending harmoniously:

"Down under the hill
There's a little mill
Where the grist is rye—old rye;
You can tell right well,
By the steam and the smell,
That there's whisky, boys, close by."

"Well, boys, have you got the last batch done?" the captain asked, cheerily, as he advanced among the men.

"That we have, Cap," replied one of the men who appeared to be foreman, "and a good share of it barreled. When are we to start another?"

"Not right away, till we dispose of some of the stock we have on hand. How does it count up?"

"About two hundred barrels, sir."

"More than we can work off for some time. I want to see some pay for what we've got on hand before we run any more money. Where is Ward-on duty?"

"Yes."

"No, he ain't," cried a voice, and a rough-looking fellow entered the still-house. "I say, captain, the chap you told me about is outside, and wants to see you."

"Very well. Come along, boys, near the door, and when I whistle, you rush out and seize the fellow!"

The captain then turned and strode from the room.

Just outside the door, mounted upon his horse, was Roger Darrel, looking flushed and overheated from his rapid ride.

"Ah, captain, is that you?" he saluted. "You see I have come."

"So I see," the captain replied. "I hardly expected you so soon."

"Probably I should not have hastened so much, only I have certain reasons for wishing to see Sadie Sefton at once."

"Well, dismount, and I'll have your horse attended to."

Then, as Darrel dismounted, the captain whistled shrilly.

Instantly the half-dozen moonshiners poured from the distillery, and pounced upon the unsuspecting squire, and bore him to the ground.

Before he was hardly aware what had happened, he was securely bound hand and foot.

"Lean him up against the building!" ordered the captain, and he was obeyed.

"There you are, sir! How do you feel?" Cussick demanded, confronting his prisoner, a grin upon his face.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" Roger demanded, furious with rage.

"I mean to impress upon your memory the fact that you are a fool!" Cussick replied.

"How a fool, curse you!"

"Why, for coming here with the expectation of seeing the girl," was the reply. "When I brought her here, it wasn't my intention to ever let you have her—not much! In due course of time she will become Mrs. Captain Cussick!"

"Curses on you!" Roger cried. "I'll pay you up for this dirty trick, if it takes me a lifetime! Release me, you infernal scoundrel!"

"Nary a release; not for awhile yet, anyhow."

"Release me, and I'll fight you, the winner to take the girl!"

"Like to accommodate you, dash me if I wouldn't, Roger, but you see, it won't pay. If I were to fight you, I'd kill you, and I can't afford that, you know. You're too valuable a piece of property to lose."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm going to command a ransom for you from your amiable mother. She's got lots of boodle, and will gladly shell out a few thousands for the sake of securing her son's liberty. D'y'e sayev?"

Roger uttered an oath.

"You'll get left on that calculation!" he declared. "She'd not give a cent to get me out of your clutches."

The captain smiled disagreeably.

"I'll take my chances on that!" he declared. "I can fetch her to terms as easy as rolling off a log."

"Supposing she positively refuses to yield to your demands?"

"In that case, your future is wrapped in uncertainty. One thing is sure: It will be a long spell before you're a free man unless she shells out. So, if you want to write a letter of appeal to her, I will free your hands."

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" Roger averred, fiercely. "I'll submit to imprisonment first. But, mark you! I shall escape you; then look out for me, for, by the eternal, I'll bring the law down upon your heads!"

The captain laughed defiantly, and waved his hand to his followers.

"Away with him, boys!" he commanded, "and see that he is securely locked up. Ward, you go and fetch my horse."

Five minutes later the moonshiner chief was in the saddle and riding rapidly away.

"Now for Darrel Manor," was his settled purpose. "If I can squeeze a round sum out of the arrogant Matilda, I'll add that to what I have already got, and bid adieu forever to Dark Run and this locality. The still can't run much longer anyhow, before the officers pounce upon it, and the sooner I get out of the way the better it will be for me. The boys can look out for themselves, and have all the stock in the lock-up for their share!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTAIN AND MRS. DARREL.

WHEN Mrs. Darrel returned to the parlor, after her kitchen interview with Bum Blinker,

she found Lawyer Coburn with his hat in hand, ready to depart.

"Why, Mr. Coburn, you are not going away?" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, I must hasten back to the village," he replied, "for it has just occurred to me that I left my valise in my room at the hotel, and as it contains valuable papers, I must go and see to the matter at once."

"Why, that is too bad, I am sure. I hope you won't lose anything. You will return here and accept of our hospitality, will you not?"

"Oh! yes, certainly, madam, certainly," and the disciple of Blackstone took his departure.

"I wonder whether he really did leave his valise?" the scheming woman asked herself after his departure, "or was that only an excuse to get away from here? If but an excuse, he must suspect something. Dear me! trouble and woe never come singly. I wish Roger would hurry back, so I can get him to set some one after that wretch, Joel Sefton. Curse the man! If he should give me away, I would have to abandon everything here and leave this part of the country."

"But no! I'll never do that. I've played my game well, so far, and it will never do to give up now. Joel Sefton must be silenced, and that, too, by a weapon mightier than money. There are plenty of coast-wreckers who are not particular what they do, so long as they get money, and some one of this class must be utilized."

The day dragged slowly along.

It was considerably past the noon hour, when Mrs. Darrel heard a footfall near, and looked up to find a man standing in her presence—and that man none other than Captain Cussick.

She gave a little cry of alarm, and sprung to her feet.

"You here?" she gasped.

"As you see!" he replied, coolly, helping himself to a chair. "You seemed surprised at sight of me!"

"You startled me. How did you gain entrance?"

"Oh, I found a window up, and came in that way. Quick and easy, you know. No long waits for the door-bell!"

"What are you here for, now?"

"Money!" was the laconic answer. "This is pay-day, I believe, or very close to it."

"You are very punctual," she sneered. "Will you never cease to harass me for blood-money?"

"Not as long as I am custodian of a very valuable piece of property," he replied, with a cynical laugh. "The fact is, Matilda, this is to be the last payment you will have to make."

"Why?" she demanded, quickly.

"Because the subject is on his last legs, and there is no possibility of his pulling through to the expiration of another month. So we will square up all accounts to-day, and have done with it."

Mrs. Darrel's thin lips became compressed tightly, and she drew from her pocket a well-filled purse, from which she took a crisp new one-hundred-dollar note.

Then she handed to Cussick.

"There! take it, and begone!" she said. "I'm getting sick and tired of these demands for money."

"Are you? But you will please remember you are not square with me yet. The last payment was to be a thousand dollars!"

"Well, you'll not get it yet. When all is over, it will then be time to make that demand!"

"I make the demand now!" he replied, emphatically. "This is the last time I shall visit you, so I must have a settlement in full, now! I have carried out my part of the agreement to the letter, and you must yours, or there'll be war in the camp, you bet!"

"But he is not dead yet!" she protested, her face growing ghastly in its pallor.

"I'll guarantee he'll not live the month out!"

"Bah! what does your guarantee amount to?"

"A blamed sight more than yours will, if you refuse to square up!" he retorted. "If you don't want a pandemonium on earth raised, Matilda, you'd best not trifling with me. You know I'm a very devil to deal with, when I am aroused!"

Evidently the woman schemer was aware of the fact, for, without a word, she turned and left the room.

With a smile of satisfaction upon his face, Cussick awaited her return.

When she did so, she placed ten one-hundred-dollar bills in his hands.

"There, Carl Cussick, that squares us forever," she said, "and you need never bother me again for money!"

"That fixes things to date!" the captain replied, as he tucked the bills away in his pocket.

"Within a month the lifeless remains of Judson Darrel will be found not many leagues from this place, and it will then be conclusively proven that he is dead, and you can claim his fortune."

"But, before I go, there's another matter I wish to call your attention to. Your estimable son, Roger, had the temerity to venture into my camp to-day, and was captured by my men, who bear him no good will, I can assure you. I tried to intercede in his behalf, but the boys would not hear to me. They say they'll not give him up without they get a ransom, and if the ransom ain't forthcoming by sunset to-day they'll put him out of the way. They directed me to tell you this, and if you wish your son released, you are to pay me the ransom money. The sum demanded is five thousand dollars, upon receipt of which I will guarantee the release of both your son and Sadie Sefton, who is also a prisoner in my camp."

"Never!" Mrs. Darrel cried, springing to her feet in a terrible passion—"never, I say! This is but another scheme to swindle me out of my money; besides, I have no such a sum in the wide world. If my son has got himself into such a scrape, he must get himself out as best he can. I can do nothing for him."

"Well, do as you like," Cussick said, indifferently. "It's too bad that a likely young fellow like him should have to pass in his checks for the want of a little financial assistance—too bad, I'll swear if it ain't!"

Mrs. Darrel made no reply, but her thin lips were pressed resolutely together, as if with defiant resolve.

"Perhaps," continued Cussick, after a moment's silence, "if you were to give me what money you have got, that, together with my influence, would secure the poor fellow's release!"

"Not one penny!" Mrs. Darrel declared, sharply, at the same time stamping her foot on the floor. "Not one farthing!"

"Ah, I see!" Cussick observed, sarcastically, as he arose and buttoned up his coat. "If Roger never comes to light, you will inherit the whole fortune. Well, by my soul, I'm bad enough, but you're an unnatural, an inhuman mother. But, have a care! There's such a thing as a slip, 'twixt the cup and the lip. It is barely possible that Judson Darrel may recover. And in that event, it may be possible that he would be willing to ransom himself and his son. But, by-by, Matilda! I won't harass you longer with my company. May the ex-saints bless you for your generosity in giving me this money, and I trust if we never again meet in this world, we shall renew acquaintance in the next. By-by, baby!"

And with a mocking laugh, the moonshiner turned and hastened from the room.

While Matilda Darrel sunk back among the cushions of her easy-chair, faint and overcome with a nameless terror.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BARGAIN CLINCHED.

KIT KEITH in his disguise of Reuben Sweet, knew that he had a trying ordeal before him in visiting the moonshiners' stronghold, but he did not flinch.

He was secretly well armed, and felt that, whatever the trouble in store, he could fight his way through.

Re-entering the bar-room, he called up the drinks for the crowd, and thereby established himself in their confidence.

He then resumed smoking his corn-cob pipe, and leisurely watched the movements of the mountain giant, Big Pete.

Kit was anxious lest the fellow should get in a disagreeable humor, and once, when Howler drew near, the Connecticut liquor merchant beckoned to him and remarked:

"If that fellow pours down much more stuff, won't he be rather dangerous to travel with?"

At which Howler laughed.

"Waal, no, sir-ee! It's just the opposite. When Pete is Pete, he's sullen and ugly, and a feller needs to keep out of his way; but when Pete is whisky, he's as pleasant and perlite as a poached egg."

"But he won't be able to find his way home. Good heavens! where does he put it all?"

"Uncle, ye don't know him. He never gets drunk. He is cast-iron, copper-lined. He's gauged for a good four quarts, but he often overruns by two or three pints," and with a broad grin the host of the Horn of Plenty passed on.

It was half an hour after midnight ere Big

Pete backed away from the bar, wiped his mouth, and cried out, as he glanced at the clock on the wall:

"Waal, boys, I must be goin'. Sorry I can't linger wi' ye till mornin', but, ye see, the fact is, I've got some important business to attend to, and bizness is bizness, you know. Hello, there, Reuben, aire you asleep?"

"Not by a jugful!" Reuben cried, springing up and coming forward; "but darn my buttons if I shouldn't think you'd be sleepy, with all the nose-paint you've got inside of you!"

The crowd roared at this, while Big Pete replied:

"Why, Rube, you old cuss, there's nothin' like gettin' used to a thing. That ain't no circumstance to what I have done. But come. We'll mosey!"

Reuben and the giant left the tavern, and were soon mounted upon their respective horses and riding away.

"You'd better let me have your bridle-rein, while you freeze to your saddle, for I'm going to ride hellat-y-toot!" Big Pete said.

"Sail ahead," Kit replied. "Ef I am gittin' old and stiff, I ain't fergot that I was once a jockey, and know'd a few things about ridin'."

"All right. Come ahead, an' take care you don't lose sight of me!"

And off went the giant at a swift gallop.

He had a fine horse under him, who could cover ground with great rapidity, but Kit's animal was every bit as good, and held her own nobly.

Fast riding at length brought them into the dense forest, and there their progress was slow, and they were obliged to ride in single file.

But Pete knew every crook and turn among the trees, and just at the first signs of day-dawn, they rode out into the glade, where the shanties of the moonshiners were located.

In answer to a challenge of "Who goes there?" Big Pete gave vent to four peculiar whistles, and he and Kit rode on.

When they reached the distillery building, they dismounted and hitched their horses, and Big Pete said:

"Come along now, old man. I see that's a light up at the captain's, and I reckon he's up."

They made their way through the semi-gloom to Cussick's shanty, and Pete rapped on the door.

"Who's there?" demanded a voice inside.

"Me, Pete!" replied the giant.

"Waal, come in then! What you knockin' for?"

Pete opened the door and entered what proved to be a scantily-furnished kitchen.

Kit followed him.

At sight of a stranger, Cussick, who was seated at a table, sprung to his feet and drew a revolver.

"Who's that?" he demanded fiercely.

"Oh! he's solid!" Pete assured, gruffly. "Set down and don't be a fool. This is Rube Sweet, a Yankee whisky-dealer, from down in Connetty-kut, an' he's up this country lookin' for a cargo of moonshine. So, as he wanted to make a big purchase, I reckoned I'd run him up here, seein' we've got a big stock on hand. Give him your card, Reuben! Oh! he's white, Cap; I sized him up well 'fore I fetched him, an' so did Howler!"

Reuben produced one of his cards and gave it to the captain, who glanced it over, and then surveyed his visitor a moment critically.

"Take a seat, Sweet," he then ordered. "I guess you're all right. Been around these parts long?"

"Jest landed about fifteen hours ago," Reuben replied.

"Whereabouts?"

"Some ten mile north of the leetle place called Jarvishaven."

"So you're lookin' after whisky, eh?"

"Waal, yes. A friend o' mine give me a private wink that there was plenty of it to be had up this country, and as my stock war gittin' rather low down in Saybrook, I tuk a notion to take an excursion on my boat up round this coast, and see what I could skeer up in the way of good juice. I've bin in the likker business over twenty year right around Saybrook, and I'll be gol-danged ef I hain't got tired o' payin' two or three prices for whisky."

"Well, I can't say as I blame you. You'll find no trouble of findin' the kind you want in old Virginia. What do you expect to pay?"

"Thirty-five cents, an' not a whit more, as I told this feller afore I come up here. If I can't ship a cargo at them figgers, I'll go hum without any at all."

"Humph! We hold ours at forty cents by the lot, and then we're not makin' a livin'."

"Well, that settles it then without any palaver," Reuben said promptly. "I ain't one o' the banterin' sort, 'cept I'm tradin' horses, an' then I kin skin a man out o' two years' growth. So you know what you want to get, and I know what I want to pay, and that settles it, plum straight!"

"Humph! I never saw a Yank yet but what didn't want the best of every bargain, the best pew in church, and in fact, the best of everything!" growled the captain. "How much whisky do you want?"

"A hundred bar'l's."

"What?"

"Ye heerd what I said?"

The captain whistled.

"Well, that makes a difference. Of course you expect to pay cash?"

"Spot cash on delivery on my boat."

"When do you want it?"

"The sooner the better."

"Hum! let's see! I s'pose you know you'll have to load up betwixt midnight and mornin'?"

"Yas. That would be safest."

"Well, to-day is Friday. Say Sunday mornin'. How will that suit you?"

"At thirty-five cents?"

"Yes."

"Waal, that'll do first-rate."

"You say your boat is not at Jarvishaven?"

"No—furder up the coast, in a little inlet. Purty 'afe place, so I'll let her stay there till loadin'-time, then I'll run up the York to where you say."

"Good idea. Jarvishaven ain't the safest place to land for any length of time. Well, we'll call it a bargain. The stuff shall be ready for you at the appointed time, at the mouth of the creek, and you shall have plenty of help to assist you in loading. I suppose you'd like to know what you're buying. I'll get you a sample."

He arose and entered an adjoining room, but soon returned with a gobletful of amber liquid.

"There! try that!" he suggested.

Reuben obeyed by taking several sips. Then he took a patent liquor-tester from his pocket, and tested the contents of the glass.

This act satisfied the captain beyond all doubt that his visitor was in reality what he represented himself to be—a liquor merchant from the East.

"That's all right!" Reuben decided, after the test. "If you give me the same in the bar'l, I won't kick."

"You shall have the same," Cussick declared. "And now, Mr. Sweet, are we to have something to clinch it with, as a guarantee of good faith?"

"Waal, I hain't got much with me for a fact," he said, taking out an old-fashioned pocket-book, "for I wasn't expectin' to make a real purchase so soon as this, an' didn't fetch much along with me from the boat. However, I reckon I can let you have a hundred dollars."

"That will do," Cussick returned, approvingly. "All I want is enough to satisfy me that you mean business."

"Oh, I'm business to the backbone!" Reuben chuckled. "Any one down in Saybrook, Connecticut, kin tell you Reuben Sweet is no slouch when it comes to business!"

And so the hundred-dollar guarantee of good faith "clinched" the bargain between the moonshiner chieftain and the Revenue Reacher.

CHAPTER XV.

A SURPRISE FOR KIT.

It was by this time full daylight, and Cussick's black-eyed wife came down-stairs to prepare breakfast.

"While Lucinda is getting some grub, friend Sweet, I'll show you around the premises, if you like," the captain said, graciously, for he was now in an excellent mood, and not without reason, too. As soon as he should get his clutches on the fifteen hundred odd dollars which the pay for the liquor would amount to, it was his intention to give the gang the slip, and skin out for parts unknown.

"Waal, I don't keer if I do take a look around," Reuben assented. "Never was at sech a place as this before."

Accordingly, the captain did the hospitable and showed his customer around the premises the principal point of interest being the still-house. Here the method of the manufacture of liquor was explained.

Then they visited the storage cellar, where rows and tiers of barrels lay, unstamped, and waiting sale in defiance of the laws of the U. S. Government.

The captain next explained the rafting process by which the liquor was conveyed down the creek to the river, and stated that it required the labor of his entire force of twenty men when a large shipment was made.

By this time, breakfast was ready, and the captain and Kit helped to do full justice to it.

During his tour of the premises, he had used his eyes to their best advantage, but had failed to discover the least clew to lead him to believe that Sadie Sefton was a prisoner in the moonshiners' camp. If she was, he concluded that she was locked up in the captain's house.

After breakfast, as he saw nothing to be gained by remaining longer in the camp, he announced that he must return to S—, as he had some stores to purchase for his boat, and other business to attend to.

Accordingly, Big Pete was detailed to escort him to the outskirts of the woods, from where it was a straight road to S—.

"The captain seemed mighty pleased over the sale he made to you," Pete observed, as they rode along.

"I don't wonder. Fifteen hundred dollars and over aire a powerful heap."

"Yes. But the captain 'll never git it!"

"Why not?" asked Kit, in surprise.

"'Cause he won't!" Pete replied, grimly. "You won't give it to him. You don't want no whisky. You can't stuff that guff down me! You're no Reuben Sweet from Connetycut, as I know'd from the first I saw you. You're a good one at your business, but you can't fool old Pete Plunkett nary time!"

Kit stared at the giant in speechless amazement.

"Why, thunderation! are you crazy, man?" he cried.

"Not the least. You might's well acknowledge the corn. You're a revenue detective, and you're playing a strong game, an' I admire ye fer it, fer I reckon ye ain't fur advanced inter yer twenties yet. Ye'r playin' a lone hand ag'in a full table, an' darn my picture if I don't reckon you'll win!"

"Well, if this don't take my time, shoot me!" Kit ejaculated, not knowing what to make of it.

"If I am a detective, as you say, how is it you, a moonshiner, are acquainting me with the fact, so good-naturedly?"

Big Pete laughed.

"I've nothin' ag'in' you," he said. "In fact, I'd like to see the hull business bu'sted up. I have been a member of the gang, but have never received anything particular for the hard work I've done. Last night, when I went to S—, I got a letter from the East, sayin' that my old mother was dead. I had about made up my mind, after that, to give up this sort of life, an' when I saw you, and tumbled to your racket, my mind became fully made up."

"The hull gang at the camp have allus been sour on me, 'cause they dassent pick a fight wi' me, an' they've showed their animosity in various sneakin' ways. So, when I met you, and sized your lay-to, sez I to myself, 'Pete, here's your chance to get square, and change your ways!' An' that's how I cum to guide you to headquarters."

"Pete, it does me proud to hear of your good resolution," Kit said, stretching forth his hand—"that is, if you mean it!"

"If I don't, may the devil kick me off this horse and break my neck!" was Pete's reply.

"Then you don't intend to go back to the Run?"

"I ain't decided yet. I'm goin' back, at least, after you've roped in the 'shiners. I've suthin' to do there. But, first, let me hear your plans."

Kit hesitated. Should he make known his plans to this man?

Could he trust him?

Big Pete noticed his hesitation, and spoke up:

"Oh, ye needn't trust me, if you're afraid to. You'd find me worthy, tho'!"

"I will trust you, Pete," Kit declared, earnestly. "But first, ere I give my plans, answer me this:

"Why did you go for Joel Sefton so fierce?"

Pete's brow darkened.

"Well, I'll tell you," he answered: "I had an ugly fit on, for one thing; and, another thing—I've had it in for the cuss sence he run away and deserted his gal, two year ago, and left her to eke out her own livin' as best she could. He were hired to leave these parts forever, you know, an' I know who hired him. But of that, more after a while. Now for your plans."

"Well, do you think the captain will raft the whisky down the creek to the river?"

"Sure. You completely shut his eye up, and

you can depend on it the whisky will be there, and the whole gang along with it. The captain expects to receive the money, watch his chance and skip. Oh, I'm dead onto his game."

"Well, I shall have a strong posse of United States officers near at hand, to capture the gang. I cannot tell you more definitely now, until I examine the whole vicinity, where the creek enters the river."

"Will you take part in the attack?"

"No. I shall plan it, and then leave it in charge of a superior officer. When I am sure the gang are well away from their stronghold, I have business there."

"Ah! What?"

"I believe Sadie Sefton to be imprisoned there, and propose to rescue her."

"She is there, locked up in Cussick's house. But, for the present, I don't think she will suffer any harm. He'll have to git rid of his wife first, for she watches him like a hawk. I, too, have a mission in the camp, after the gang are gone; so, if you are agreeable, we will go together."

"Of course. I have no objections. But what is your mission?"

"I will tell you: For two years past, Cap Cussick has had a man locked up in a dungeon in the rear of the whisky vault. Cussick has been paid to keep the man a prisoner there by the man's wife. I never knew any of these facts, until I overheard a conversation yesterday between Cussick and his wife. It appears the man's own wife has kept her husband shut up in order to get possession of his money! I propose to release him. It was also my intention to free the Sefton gal. But now, since we understand each other, we will go together."

"You bet we will! But, do you know this man prisoner's name?"

"Yes. It is Judson Darrel. He has been, by most everybody, believed dead."

"My father!" cried Kit.

"Your father?" ejaculated Big Pete.

"Yes. His real name is Kyle Kenneth, and I am his only legitimate offspring."

Kit then went on and explained the story of his life, as he had heard it from Mother Miggs, and knew it himself.

Big Pete listened with rapt attention.

"Well, if this be true, you can claim the Darrel fortune," he averred, "for, judging by what I heard Cap Cussick tell his wife, the prisoner in the whisky-vault ain't booked for much longer in this world!"

"I hope to Heaven he does not die until I can see him," Kit said.

By this time they were out of the woods and drew rein.

"To avoid suspicion of my intention to desert, I reckon I'll return to the camp," Big Pete announced. "I'll hang around there until late Saturday, and then manufacture some pretense for goin' to S—, an' will meet you near the Sefton cottage."

"All right. I shall expect you. I will go now and wire word to Washington, so as to be sure and have my men on hand. You return to headquarters and keep your eyes about you, and if opportunity arrives for you to get a word with Sadie Sefton, assure her that she will soon be liberated."

"Very well. And now before you go, I'd kinder like to know what you look like under that disguise."

Kit accordingly removed the wig and beard and exposed his own handsome phiz to view.

"I am Kit Keith, of Washington!" he said.

Big Pete uttered an ejaculation.

"I thought Cussick had a spy of your name thrown into the sea?"

"So he did, but, by good fortune, Mother Miggs fished me out and restored me to life."

"Waal, ye'r' a plucky cuss, anyhow, an' I reckon I wasn't fur off in regard to your age."

"No you were not. I am only a trifle over twenty-two."

They separated, Big Pete returning to the rendezvous, and Kit riding off toward B—, the nearest telegraph station, some four miles from S—.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RETRIEVER RETRIEVES.

WHEN Kit Keith reached B—, he immediately sought the telegraph office and sent the following dispatch to the chief of revenue detectives, at Washington:

"Have succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. All ready for a grand pull early Sunday morning. Have fifty specials in private dress here at dusk, to-morrow night. Will meet you 'hen. Answer.

KIT KEITH."

The message was flashed over the wire without delay, and in half an hour an answer came back:

"MR. KIT KEITH:—

"Will come by water. Land two miles north of Jarvis aven, Saturday evening. Come there.

"COL. —

"Acting Chief U. S. R. Detectives."

Mounting his horse he returned to S—, and found Lawyer Coburn at the Horn of Plenty tavern. Taking him to one side and introducing himself, Kit held a somewhat lengthy consultation with the attorney, after which he remounted his horse, and set out for Darrel Manor, where he intended to make a call.

On arrival there he dismounted, hitched his horse, and rung the door-bell. The summons was promptly answered by a servant, to whom Kit presented a card bearing the name:

HON. JOSHUA BRADLEY.

In his detective excursions the retriever always carried with him a stock of business and calling cards containing various names, finding that it aided him materially in perfecting his changes of character.

The servant disappeared with the card, but soon returned and ushered the caller into the parlor and bade him be seated.

A few minutes later Mrs. Darrel entered, and Kit at once recognized her as the same woman he had encountered in Washington.

She was looking pale and haggard now, however, and had evidently passed a restless night.

"Mrs. Darrel, I believe!" Kit remarked, rising, with a profound bow.

"I am Mrs. Darrel, yes, sir," was the reply, in a tone that evidenced that the lady was in none too pleasant a humor. "And, you, sir—?"

"Am Kit Keith, the detective!" was the reply; and, by a quick movement of his hands, Kit removed his false beard and wig, at the same time covering Mrs. Darrel with a revolver. "Do you recognize me, madam?"

Mrs. Darrel started back with a wild cry of alarm, her face growing sickly pale.

"You!" she gasped.

"I, madam! I see you recognize me. Although I lost track of you in Washington, I have at last run you down and found out the whole of my history. I know all, everything, and have called to see how soon you will be ready to vacate these premises."

"Never!" the woman replied, her hands clinching together. "I am mistress here, and intend to remain so. Who are you, that you dare to come here and ask me when I intend to vacate?"

"I am the only legitimate son and heir of Kyle Kenneth, who married you under the assumed name of Judson Darrel when he had a wife living. You were not then a legitimate wife, madam, and your son, Roger, therefore, is not of legitimate birth. My mother's marriage-certificate is in existence to prove that she was legally wedded to Kyle Kenneth several months before you were. Also, I believe, proof of this fact can be found among Kyle Kenneth's papers. Unknown to you, I was in this house yesterday, but could not gain entrance to my father's library. I desire to visit that apartment now, madam."

"You cannot do so. I command you to leave my house instantly."

"And I refuse. There is no such thing as cannot. You must admit me to the library, madam. Refuse me, and, woman though you are, I'll shoot you down as though you were a she wolf. I mean to search the library, to see if I can find a will. Remember, you have got a man now to deal with who will not be thwarted."

Mrs. Darrel laughed scornfully.

"Oh, well, you can search the library, if you like," she said, "but you will find nothing, for it has already been thoroughly searched and nothing found. You cannot prove your claim, nor anything you have said, you adventurer, and I will have you arrested for a fraud and blackmailer."

"Look out I don't have you arrested for keeping Kyle Kenneth locked up in a dungeon for two years," Kit retorted. "Come! I wish to be conducted to the library. Any attempt to give an alarm or to frustrate my plans will result in your being shot down. I do not intend to punish you by law if you accede to my terms. I intend to dispossess you of this estate and have all my rights fully conceded. So, if you don't want a term of imprisonment, you will find it to your advantage to obey my orders promptly and implicitly."

White with rage, Mrs. Darrel glared at him a moment as if she would like to strike him down with a death-blow; then, grating her teeth in vicious impatience, she said:

"Well, come along. You can search till doom'sday, for all I care!"

She led the way from the parlor to a room on the second floor, the door of which she unlocked, and she and Kit entered.

The room was of good size, cozily furnished, and contained several desks and bookcases.

"Give me the keys to the desks, and then sit down yonder in the corner, and don't you dare to move!" Kit ordered. "I won't detain you long."

Trembling with her illy-suppressed passion, she obeyed him.

After receiving the keys, he proceeded to make a minute examination of the desks, at the same time keeping his revolver handy for use, and an eye on the now desperate schemer.

Examination of the first desk and its contents yielded no discovery, the desk being of ordinary construction, and the contents of a commonplace business character.

The same occurred in the instance of the second and third desks.

The fourth desk was rather an antique affair, and Kit's hopes rose a little as he began its examination.

Mrs. Darrel watched him narrowly.

Suddenly, a cry from his lips caused her to spring to her feet in eager expectancy.

He had touched what was apparently a solid knot in the interior of the desk, and a secret panel had shot to one side, revealing a cavity beyond.

Reaching into it, he drew forth two documents.

"Last will and testament of Kyle Kenneth, otherwise known as Judson Darrel!" he read. "Also, the 'Confession of Kyle Kenneth,' Ha-ha! the very papers I want!"

"Give them to me—they are mine!" fairly screamed Mrs. Darrel, rushing toward him. "They are mine—give them to me!"

"Back!" ordered Kit, sternly, leveling his revolver at her. "Come nearer, and I'll drop you!"

Then, with weapon poised, he examined the documents.

His face lighted up as he did so.

The confession was first read.

It told of Kyle Kenneth's sinful life; of how he had married twice; of how he had pushed his true wife into the sea, and afterward had given his son, Christopher, to an Italian organ-grinder.

It also narrated the incidents of Kit's life, up to the time he entered the United States revenue service, and in conclusion asked his son's forgiveness, and further stated that the confession was made in fear of impending evil, the confessor believing that his second wife had designs upon his life in order to secure his property.

The will bequeathed all his money, real estate and personal property to his son, Christopher Kenneth, who, at the time of the making of the will, bore the name of Kit Keith.

When the young retriever had finished the perusal of these documents, he read them aloud to Mrs. Darrel, who listened, pale and speechless.

"You see now that I am master here, I presume!" Kit observed, "and that you will have to vacate. I shall place these papers in the hands of a lawyer, and have matters settled up at once!"

"I won't vacate!" she hissed. "I'll stay here and fight you in court!"

"Perhaps," Kit said, dryly—"perhaps not. When I tell you that, within a few hours, Cap Cussick's gang will be broken up, and Kyle Kenneth set at liberty, fierce and vengeful—perhaps, then, you won't care to tarry long in this neighborhood."

The guilty woman reeled back at this information, and with a gasping moan, fell prone upon the floor.

Leaving her lying where she had fallen, Kit pocketed his precious papers and left the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

WHAT remains to be told it need not take long to relate.

Saturday evening a revenue cutter, containing a strong posse of officers, dropped anchor above Jarvishaven, and was met by Kit Keith, who conducted them to an ambush near where the Dark Run Creek emptied into the York River, and gave them such instructions as would enable them to capture the moonshiners without much trouble.

Kit then made his way to the vicinity of the Sefton cottage, where he found Big Pete waiting for him.

At Kit's suggestion they visited the dwelling, and found the bummer at home, and by Kit's intercession the tramp and giant consented to cancel all differences and shake the hand of reconciliation.

Joel Sefton volunteered to make a third party in the visit to the moonshiners' headquarters, and soon after dark the trio started forth, each well mounted.

In due time they reached the neighborhood of the stronghold, and Big Pete stole forward to reconnoiter. On his return, he reported that the coast was clear, and they went forward.

They found the camp entirely deserted of moonshiners.

They first visited Cussick's shanty, and, lying dead upon the kitchen floor, they found the captain's wife, with a bullet-wound in her head.

Anxious for Sadie's safety, the three men rushed up stairs and burst in the door, only to find her sleeping soundly upon her bed, safe and unharmed.

Great was her joy, on being awakened, to find herself in the presence of her father, and of the young detective as well.

Leaving father and daughter together, Kit and Big Pete visited the whisky-vault, and, gaining an entrance, lit a lantern.

In the rear they found two dungeons, the doors wide open.

Flashing the light into the cells, a sight met the gaze of the two men that caused them to shudder with horror.

Upon the floor of one cell lay the blood-covered figure of Roger Darrel, stone dead!

In the other cell, upon a cot, lay another man, gray-haired, gaunt and ghastly.

He was also dead, but this was not a case of murder. He had evidently died naturally.

The two searchers hastened from the spot, and soon the quartette set out for Darrel Manor—Sadie mounted on Cussick's best horse.

On their arrival there, early Sunday morning, they were informed that Mrs. Darrel had taken a hasty departure, stating that she should never return.

Nor was she ever heard from thereafter!

There was a terrific fight that early Sunday morning, between the revenue officers and the moonshiners, during which several of the latter were killed, Captain Cussick included.

The distillery in Dark Run was broken up, and nothing now remains to tell of that which was.

Kyle Kenneth's body was removed to S—, and treated to a respectable burial by his son.

Kit had no difficulty in establishing his right of heritage, and came into possession of his property.

Kenneth Manor to-day, as an estate, contains many more acres than it formerly did, and among those who enjoy its bountiful hospitality may be named, Joel Sefton, Mother Miggs, otherwise Clara Colville, and Big Pete Plunket, who, in Kit's absence, is general manager.

Sadie came into her little fortune, and, that Kit should lead her to the altar is a matter of course.

Jack Jarvis and a portion of his gang were arrested, along with the moonshiners—all of whom received sentences commensurate with their crime.

THE END.

Beadle's Dime Library.

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- 1 A Hard Crowd; or, Gentleman Sam's Sister.
- 4 The Kidnapper; or, The Northwest Shanghai.
- 29 Tiger Dick, Faro King; or, The Cashier's Crime.
- 54 Always on Hand; or, The Foot-Hills Sport.
- 80 A Man of Nerve; or, Caliban the Dwarf.
- 114 The Gentleman from Pike.
- 171 Tiger Dick, the Man of the Iron Heart.
- 207 Old Hard Head; or, Whirlwind and his Mare.
- 251 Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard.
- 280 Tiger Dick's Lone Hand.
- 299 Three of a Kind; or, Dick, Despard and the Sport.
- 338 Jack Sands, the Boss of the Town.
- 359 Yellow Jack, the Mestizo.
- 380 Tiger Dick's Pledge; or, The Golden Serpent.
- 404 Silver Sid; or, A "Daisy" Bluff.
- 431 California Kit, the Always on Hand.
- 472 Six Foot Si; or, The Man to "Tie To."
- 502 Bareback Buck, the Centaur of the Plains.
- 522 The Champion Three.
- 544 The Back to Back Pards.
- 567 Captain Midnight, the Man of Craft.
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BY PROF. J. H. INGRAHAM.

- 113 The Sea Slipper; or, The Freebooters.
- 118 The Burglar Captain; or, The Fallen Star.
- 314 Lafitte; or, The Pirate of the Gulf.
- 316 Lafitte's Lieutenant; or, Child of the Sea.

BY GEORGE C. JENKS.

- 398 Sleepless Eye, the Pacific Detective.
- 432 The Giant Horseman.
- 507 The Drummer Detective.
- 526 Death-Grip, the Tenderfoot Detective.
- 538 Rube Rocket, the Tent Detective.
- 554 Mad Sharp, the Rustler.
- 572 Jaunty Joe, the Jockey Detective.

BY OLL COOMES.

- 7 Death Notch, the Destroyer.
- 43 Dakota Dan, the Reckless Ranger.
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- 46 Bowie-Knife Ben, the Nor'west Hunter.
- 48 Idaho Tom, the Young Outlaw of Silverland.
- 51 Red Rob, the Boy Road-Agent.
- 99 The Giant Rifleman; or, Wild Camp Life.
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- 619 Kit Bandy & Co, the Border Detectives.

BY EDWARD WILLETT.

- 129 Mississippi Mose; or, a Strong Man's Sacrifice.
- 209 Buck Farley, the Bonanza Prince.
- 222 Bill the Blizzard; or, Red Jack's Crime.
- 248 Montana Nat, the Lion of Last Chance Camp.
- 274 Flush Fred, the Mississippi Sport.
- 289 Flush Fred's Full Hand.
- 298 L'gger Lem; or, Life in the Pine Woods.
- 308 Hemlock Hank, Tough and True.
- 315 Flush Fred's Double; or, The Squatters' League.
- 327 Terrapin Dick, the Wildwood Detective.
- 337 Old Gabe, the Mountain Tramp.
- 348 Dan Dillon, King of Crosscut.
- 368 The Canyon King; or, a Price on his Head.
- 483 Flush Fred, the River Sharp.

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- 16 The White Wizard; or, The Seminole Prophet.
- 18 The Sea Bandit; or, The Queen of the Isle.
- 23 The Red Warrior; or, The Comanche Lover.
- 61 Captain Seawulf, the Privateer.
- 111 The Smuggler Captain; or, The Skipper's Crime.
- 122 Saul Sabberday, the Idiot Spy.
- 270 Andros, the Rover; or, The Pirate's Daughter.
- 361 Tombstone Dick, the Train Pilot.
- 517 Buffalo Bill's First Trail.
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- 621 The Red Privateer; or, The Midshipman Rover.

BY WILLIAM R. EYSTER.

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- 182 Hands Up; or, The Knights of the Canyon.
- 192 The Lightning Sport.
- 214 The Two Cool Sports; or, Gertie of the Gulch.
- 229 Captain Cutsleeve; or, The Little Sport.
- 268 Magic Mike, the Man of Frills.
- 300 A Sport in Spectacles; or, Bad Time at Bunco.
- 333 Derringer Dick, the Man with the Drop.
- 344 Double Shot Dave of the Left Hand.
- 356 Three Handsome Sports; or, The Combination.
- 375 Royal George, the Three in One.
- 396 The Piper Detective; or, The Gilt Edge Gang.
- 402 Snapshot Sam; or, The Angels' Flat Racket.
- 429 Hair Trigger Tom of Red Bend.
- 459 Major Sunshine, the Man of Three Lives.
- 478 Pinnacle Pete; or, The Fool from Way Back.
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- 525 Fresh Frank, the Derringer Daisy.
- 533 Oregon, the Sport With a Scar.
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BY SAM S. HALL—“Buckskin Sam.”

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- 191 The Terrible Tonkaway; or, Old Rocky's Pards.
- 195 The Lone Star Gambler; or, Magnolia's Maid.
- 199 Diamond Dick, the Dandy from Denver.
- 204 Big Foot Wallace, the King of the Lariat.
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 548 Captain Cactus, the Chaparral Cock; or, Josh's Ten Strike.
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 576 The Silver Sport; or, Josh Peppermint's Jubilee.
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 285 Denver Doll's Decoy; or, Little Bill's Bonanza.
 296 Denver Doll's Drift; or, The Road Queen.
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 372 Yreka Jim's Prize; or, The Wolves of Wake-Up.
 385 Yreka Jim's Joker; or, The Rivals of Red Nose.
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 181 Wild Frank the Buckskin Bravo; or, Lady Lily's Love.
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 548 Mart, the Night Express Detective.
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 615 Fighting Harry the Chief of Chained Cyclone.
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 555 Lafitte's Confession; or, The Creole Corsair.
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 530 The Buckskin Bowers; or, The Cowboy Pirates.
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 507 The Royal Middy's Luck; or, The Hunted Midshipman.
 511 The Royal Middy's Foe.
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 438 Duncan Dare's Flet; or, A Cabin Boy's Luck.
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